

TOS 4402

# African Bird Club



Bulletin of the African Bird Club

Vol 16 No 2 September 2009

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Angolan bird  
vocalisations

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Rediscovery of Lake  
Lufira Weaver

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Survey of the Ruvuma  
Delta, Mozambique

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Birds in Omo Forest  
Reserve, SW Nigeria

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Breeding biology of  
Réunion Stonechat

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Prigogine's Nightjar:  
its song and possible  
occurrence in  
Lower Guinea

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Buff-spotted Flufftail

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**The African Bird Club aims to:**

- provide a worldwide focus for African ornithology
- encourage an interest in the conservation of the birds of the region
- liaise with and promote the work of existing regional societies
- publish a twice-yearly colour bulletin
- encourage observers to visit lesser known areas of the region
- encourage observers to actively search for globally threatened and near-threatened species
- run the ABC Conservation Programme

Registered Charity No 1053920

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Supporting	UK£30 minimum	
Life	UK£350	

To join or for further details please visit the ABC website (where there are secure online payment facilities) or write to the Membership Secretary—see contact information below.

**ABC Website**<http://www.africanbirdclub.org>**Photographers and artists**

ABC is always looking for drawings and photos to publish in the Bulletin. If you are interested in contributing, please contact the Graphics Editor, Pete Leonard, [pleonard@care4free.net](mailto:pleonard@care4free.net)

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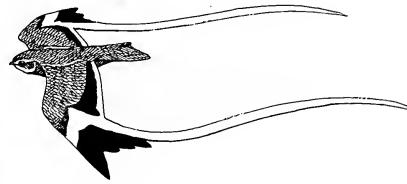
The Bulletin of the ABC provides a forum for news, letters, notices, recent publications, expedition results, reviews and interim publication of studies on African birds by contributors from throughout the world. Publication of results in the Bulletin of the ABC does not preclude publication of final results as journal papers either by the ABC or elsewhere. No

material should, however, be submitted simultaneously to the Bulletin of the ABC and to any other publication.

Brief notes for contributors appear elsewhere in this Bulletin and further details are available from the Editor ([editor@africanbirdclub.org](mailto:editor@africanbirdclub.org)).

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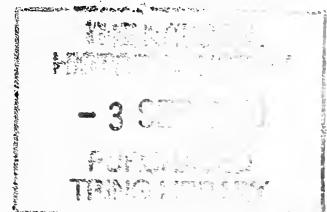
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## Front cover plate

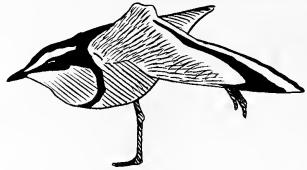
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# Club News



## ABC website

### Bird images

ABC has part-funded a major new development on AFBID, the African Bird Image Database at [www.birdquest.net/afbid](http://www.birdquest.net/afbid), which provides a comprehensive country search capability on the home page. A user can now search on family, species, country and combinations of these using drop-down lists. Examples of searches using this capability are as follows: (1) 'Passeridae; passer griseus northern grey sparrow; any'; (2) 'Passeridae; passer griseus northern grey sparrow; Tanzania'; and (3) 'Passeridae; passer griseus northern grey sparrow; Tanzania and Kenya'. These searches will show the following: (1) all images of Northern Grey Sparrow on the database; (2) all images on the database taken in Tanzania; and (3) all images on the database taken in Kenya and Tanzania. The final search can be achieved by clicking on Kenya, then pressing the control key on your keyboard and clicking on Tanzania. Finally, the search 'any; Burkina Faso', for example, will show images of all species taken in Burkina Faso. To facilitate this change, the user now selects the country the image was taken in when the image is loaded. The countries for previously loaded images have been added to the database. Additionally, the

country the image was taken in is shown below thumbnail images. A quick species search is also available to permit users to enter and search free-form text in English or French. For example, a search on 'sparrow' or 'moineau' will show all results from the database of the data string 'sparrow' or 'moineau' respectively. This quick species search is available on all AFBID pages for rapid use. We anticipate that the new search capabilities will be of value to users investigating the birds of a single country or variations in a species across several countries, as well as to those who use AFBID to help identify species they have photographed.

New images and species are still being added to AFBID and there are now over 11,000 images of 1,859 species. We are still seeking new images of species already included in order to show different views of the bird and to help show differences in subspecies or variation across Africa.

### Bird sounds

There has been an increase in recordings of African species on [www.xeno-canto.org](http://www.xeno-canto.org) since the spring Bulletin 16(1). We would still like to hear more recordings of birds from the African region and we hope to enlist more Club members to load their recordings. Many of you are seasoned researchers of African bird song and have made many record-

ings on your travels. We encourage you to upload some of these onto the database. Recordings are shared under a Creative Commons license, permitting free distribution but no commercial use without the consent of the recordist, and all rights remain with the latter.

## ABC forum

We would like to remind Club members that there is a forum at [www.africanbirdclub.org/phorum](http://www.africanbirdclub.org/phorum), which allows users to post questions and comments on issues important to them. Topics such as birding sites, identification, conservation and general queries have been posted to date. The forum has a comprehensive search capability, allowing users to search for all posts containing 'Uganda' for example. It can be especially useful for people wishing to distribute an attachment, e.g. a photo for identification, which capability is unavailable via the African Birding distribution list.

## WildSounds

Many of you purchase books and sound-recordings from WildSounds via the ABC website. Each purchase via this link generates a donation for the ABC Conservation Fund. We have recently loaded a new profile for each country, which contains several exciting new publications. Please continue to make your purchases via this link and generate more money for conservation.

*Contributed by John Caddick*

AFBID

xeno-canto.org

## Another ornithologist leaves Zimbabwe

ABC members will be interested to learn that Dale Hanmer has now moved to the UK. She will be undoubtedly much missed in ornithological circles within Zimbabwe. Dale originated in South Africa, but from the early 1970s spent many

years in Malawi, where she operated a long-term ringing study at Nchalo, in the lower Shire Valley in the south of the country. After c.15 years she moved to Mutare in eastern Zimbabwe and quickly found several ringing sites. My son and I joined Dale once for a memorable ringing session at one of her sites at Bvumba Botanic Gardens in the Eastern Highlands, catching sunbirds. She produced many papers and notes, for *Scopus*, *Safing / Afing News* and other journals, on diverse subjects such as Palaearctic passerines, the timing of moult in African birds, ageing and sexing, the impacts of drought on birds and their longevity, all based on her Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe observations. She received several awards from ABC to assist her ringing studies and to further her work on mountain robins in Zimbabwe. We wish her well in the UK.

Contributed by Steph Tyler

#### ABC 2009 Twickenham meeting and AGM

Around 65 members and guests attended a busy day at York House, Twickenham, on 4 April 2009. In his opening address Tasso Leventis mentioned his honour to have become the ABC President and how he was looking forward to being involved in the Club. He said that the Club had come a long way in the 15 years since it was formed, which success was due to the contribution of the various officers and members, to whom he offered his heartfelt thanks. His introduction paved the way for the quality programme that had been arranged for the day.

Ian Fisher stood in for Vicki Jones, who was unable to attend, speaking about the Wings Over Wetlands (WOW) project, the largest international wetland and waterbird conservation initiative ever attempted in the African–Eurasian region, covering all of Africa and Europe, south-west Asia (including the Middle East and Central Asia), Greenland and Canada. The project is a joint undertaking of Wetlands International and BirdLife International, with the support of a

wide range of donors and partners. Its central feature is the Critical Site Network (CSN) tool, a web-based information system that amalgamates data from different sources. The CSN will provide comprehensive site and flyway-scale information for 300 waterbird species, including all 235 species covered by the African–Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA). The website can be viewed at <http://www.wings-overwetlands.org/>.

Ian went on to describe the Worldbirds ([www.worldbirds.org](http://www.worldbirds.org)) project, which is dedicated to putting bird sightings on the map. The number of birders that travel, particularly from countries such as the UK and USA, ensures a huge resource is available for recording sightings. The project aims to create a network of country-based sightings compiled into a web-based platform for collection, storage and retrieval. Developed as a global ‘family’ of databases, each country has its own system linked to the map portal accessible via the website. This portal permits you to select a country and then submit your bird observations, thereby making a valuable contribution to bird conservation at local, national and international scales.

Agnès Giannotti gave a short presentation about her new book *Oiseaux d'Afrique—Les plus belles histoires*. Agnès is a doctor from Paris who lives in northern Benin for part of each year. She is a keen wildlife photographer and each chapter of her book contains photographs of a species or group of species, interwoven with stories of birds from tribal folklore. She believes that to conserve the natural world, it is very important to understand the spiritual and historical significance of each species to local people. Agnès gave an example from her book of the story of the God of Thunder who visited the Earth to help the Goddess of Water who was under attack. He was only able to return to the heavens after emulating the calls of the cranes. As a result, local people are strictly forbidden to kill cranes. Agnès spent four years trying to photograph Black Crowned Cranes *Balearica pavonina*



ABC President Tasso Leventis (left) and Chairman Keith Betton (Alan Williams)

until a villager informed her that they were feeding on the Niger side of the border.

Alex Hipkiss spoke about bird conservation challenges in the Gola Forest, the most important forest in Sierra Leone with 650 species, making it a biodiversity hotspot. The Gola Forest Reserve, founded through a partnership between the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the Sierra Leone government, is helping to protect some of the most vulnerable species and habitat in the area. Some of the environmental problems include bushmeat hunting and local mining interests. Birds such as White-breasted Guineafowl *Agelastes meleagrides*, Rufous Fishing Owl *Scotopelia ussheri* and White-necked Picathartes *Picathartes gymnocephalus* are just three species the project is seeking to conserve. There is a need to limit forest clearance in and around the reserve and integrate local people into the development of an effective management plan including land use regulations, alternative livelihoods, ecotourism and other activities that will limit encroachment.

Guy Eldridge shared some of his work in ‘A video tour of Madagascar’. He presented a selection of the sights and sounds one could experience during a visit to the island. Species such as Madagascar Crested Ibis *Lophotibis cristata*, Meller’s Duck *Anas melleri*, Collared Nightjar *Caprimulgus enarratus*,

Scaly Ground Roller *Brachypteryx squamigera*, Rufous-headed Ground Roller *Atelornis crossleyi*, Cuckoo Roller *Leptosomus discolor*, Appert's Tetrax *Xanthomixis apperti* and the rare and difficult to observe Brown Emu-tail *Dromaeocercus brunneus* were just a few of the endemics featured in his presentation.

A talk on 'The Birds of the Comores' was presented by Michel Louette, who gave a detailed account of an atlas study that identified 59 species as breeding on the islands. The atlas confirmed that these are important islands for bird conservation.

The final talk was 'Birds of Ethiopia' by Nik Borrow. With the recent publication of two books on the country, this was a topical talk. Nik took us on a whirlwind tour of Ethiopia starting in Addis Ababa, thence to the Entoto Hills, the tributaries and gorges of the Blue Nile, the Ankober Escarpment, the Awash River, Rift Valley Lakes, the Bale Mountains and many other locations. His presentation rounded off an

informative day guaranteed to whet the appetite of any African birder.

### 2010 AGM

The 2010 AGM will be held on Saturday 10 April 2010 at the BTO headquarters, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk, UK. This announcement constitutes official notification of the AGM as required by the Club's constitution. Full details of the AGM agenda and programme for the day, including times of the meeting, will be posted to all UK-resident members in early 2010. To save postage, the programme will not be automatically distributed to members living outside the UK. Any overseas member wanting a copy, either by post or e-mail, can write to the Club Secretary. Details will also appear on the Club website.

### New Council members needed

At our next AGM the Club will have two vacancies on Council and we are interested to hear from anyone that is potentially interested. ABC is based in the UK, so for practical reasons

any candidates need to be based there. Both positions are entirely voluntary.

The **Treasurer** is responsible for maintaining records of the Club's income, expenditure and assets, supervising financial transactions on the Club's behalf, preparing the annual report and accounts for independent examination and presenting them for approval at the AGM.

The **Sales Officer** seeks to identify suppliers and purchase goods for stock, and to satisfy orders, organise the display and marketing of sales at the AGM, bird fairs and other events, as well as maintain records of sales receipts, payments and stocks. He or she is also responsible for managing the Club's participation at the British Birdwatching Fair.

If you are interested in either role please contact Keith Betton ([chairman@africanbirdclub.org](mailto:chairman@africanbirdclub.org)) in the first instance. ABC Council meets in London on three Saturdays each year, whilst the AGM is in April and the Birdfair is in August.

*Contributed by Keith Betton*

## Minutes of the 15th AGM of the African Bird Club

held at Clarendon Hall, York House, Richmond Road,

Twickenham, Middlesex, TW1 3AA

at 13.45 hrs on Saturday 4 April 2009

### Present

The following members registered their attendance at the meeting:  
Helen Baker, M. J. Barden, David Barker, Keith Betton, Michael Bird, Nik Borrow, Ruth Bray, John Caddick, Peter Cherry, Clive Dickson, Janet Dickson, Guy Eldridge, John Farnsworth, David Fisher, Agnès Giannotti, Tony Gibbs, Phil Hall, Chris Hendley, Trevor Jenner, Peter Jones, Michael Kings, Paul Lascelles, Ann Lawson, Russell Leavett, Tasso Leventis, Denise Lievesley, Keith Lievesley, Michel Louette, Duncan Macdonald, David Murdoch, Geoff Orton, Stephen Pringle, Bev Randall, Geoff Randall, Pat Sellar, Danae Sheenan, Steph Tyler, Jan Hein van Steenis, Sue Walsh, David A. White, Kay

E. White, Alan Williams, Barbara Woodcock, Martin Woodcock.

The following non-participating guests registered their attendance at the meeting: H. V. Beschermung, G. Carr, John Corkindale, S. Farnsworth, Ian Fisher, Peter Greening, Carolyn Hall, Tony Harding, Raymond Harrison, Alex Hipkiss, Mrs Johnson, Ken Kilburn, Chris Mason, David Ouvry, Linda Owen, E. F. Parker, Caroline Robinson, Mr Sibley, Anne Stewart, John van den Bosh, A. G. Walker, Pieter Wessels, J Williamson.

### 1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Phil Atkinson, Chris Bowden, Flip Bruce Lockhart, Dennis Buisson, Herbert Byaruhanga, David R. Calder,

Stephen Cameron, Ron Demey, Stan Fourie, Gordon & Jan Gale, Guy Kirwan, Peter Lack, Nittaya Lawrence, Pete Leonard, Jeremy Lindsell, Philip McGowan, Anne Nason, Ralph Parks, Derek Pomeroy, David Porter, Bill & Rowena Quantrill, Nigel Redman, Yvonne Savidge, Keith J. Seaton.

### 2. Minutes of the last meeting

The Minutes of the last meeting had been published in the Bulletin, on the Club's website and copies were distributed at the meeting. It was noted that the copies of Minutes distributed at the meeting contained one error in the heading, as the year was stated to be 2007, instead of 2008, otherwise no comments were received. Subject to that error being

corrected, David White proposed that the Minutes be accepted, Alan Williams seconded, and the proposal was approved unanimously.

### 3. Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

### 4. Report of the Council

The report was presented by Keith Betton as follows.

**Membership.** Membership at the end of 2007 was 1,224. During 2008 139 new members joined but 119 members failed to renew; at the end of 2008 membership stood at 1,244. Compared to 2007 this represents an 11% increase in lapsed memberships but a 51% increase in new memberships. Local payment schemes continue to operate in Kenya, Madagascar, South Africa, Uganda and Zimbabwe.

**Conservation Fund.** The conservation of African birds and their habitats continues to be a key objective of the Club. In 2008 the Club paid UK£13,589 in support of 15 projects in nine countries: Angola, Botswana, Eritrea, Kenya, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. An additional UK£2,549 was expended in support of PAOC 2008. The majority of these funds arise from membership subscriptions and general donations, but in 2008 Corporate Sponsors funded projects as follows: Avifauna—Lake Victoria project in Kenya; Hyde-Lascelles—Akanyaru survey in Rwanda; and WildSounds—Avifaunal Road Counts in South Africa.

**Bulletin.** Feedback from members regarding the Bulletin remains very positive. The 2007 volume, No. 15, contained 288 pages, compared to 240 in 2007. The amount of colour has been increased and Council intends to continue that trend. The Publications Committee will be seeking more 'birding' articles for 2009 and beyond.

**Website.** During 2008 the AFBID (African Bird Image Database) attracted a further 111 photographers, with a total of 540 now registered. Ten thousand images are available covering 1,800 species. French language has been

added to selected parts of the website. Seventy-eight checklists (at least one for each country in Africa) are available and these have lead to 8,000 downloads. Although these downloads are free a number of users make donations. The xeno-canto/Africa database of bird vocalisations was launched in March 2008 and the number of registered recorders and submitted recordings is now growing. The Gambia Birding group website has now been incorporated into the ABC website.

**Corporate Sponsorship.** The year saw a further increase in the number of Corporate Members and Sponsors, with 36 by the end of 2008. Council has decided that the number of Corporate Sponsors should be limited to 40. The success of the Corporate Sponsorship programme has been largely due to the work of Elaine Cook who is relinquishing that role. The new Corporate Sponsorship Officer is Stephen Cameron. At the end of 2008 the Corporate Sponsors were: Abacus African Safaris, Access African Safaris, Adventure Trails, Aim 4 Africa, Avian Adventures, Ben's Ecological Safaris, Birding Africa, Birding Ecotours, Birdquest, Bird Uganda, Birdwatching Breaks, Calluna Books, Crystal Safaris, Field Guides Inc, Great Lakes Safaris, Greentours, Halcyon Gambia, Hyde-Lascelles, Jenner Expeditions, Lake Kitandara, Lawson's Birding Tours, Limosa, Meet us in Africa, MKA Ecology, Naturetrek, NHBS, Ornitholidays, Rockjumper Birding Tours, Sarus Bird Tours, Sunbird, Tropical Birding, Turaco Tours, Turtle Bay Beach Club, WildSounds, Wildwings, and Zeiss.

**Sales.** Merchandise sales were slightly reduced during 2008, with a total of UK£2,042. This was balanced by a substantial reduction in expenditure on sales following the launch of new lines in 2007. New products will be launched again in 2009 subject to securing suitable sponsorship. Sales of Bulletin back issues yielded UK£1,389 and the raffle UK£1,711. Bev Randall, the current Sales Officer will be retiring at the 2010 AGM, and a new Sales Officer is sought.

### Country Representatives.

ABC now has representatives in 38 countries (28 within Africa) but representatives are still required for 29 African countries. Recent representative appointments were made in Ethiopia, Djibouti, Somalia, Malawi, Rwanda, Libya and the USA. Representatives are encouraged to submit periodic reports to Council and these are now included in the Country Pages of the website. Full lists of representatives and countries for which we still require representatives appear in the Bulletin.

**Council.** Neil Thomas retired from Council at the 2009 AGM. Chris Magin is seeking election this year for the first time and Stephen Cameron will soon be joining Council (as Corporate Sponsorship Officer) by co-option, as his candidacy was too late for formal election at the AGM. He will submit himself to election at the 2010 AGM. John Caddick has given notice of his intention to retire as Treasurer at the 2010 AGM but will still offer himself for re-election to Council. Geoff Randall has also given notice of his desire to retire as Secretary at the 2010 AGM and will not stand for re-election. Council is therefore seeking people to fill the roles of Treasurer, Secretary and Sales Officer as Members of Council (Trustees).

### 5. Presentation of the Accounts for 2008 and the Treasurer's Report

Copies of the Summarised Accounts as included in this Bulletin were distributed at the meeting. John Caddick, in presenting the accounts, reported that 2008 was an excellent year for the Club's finances.

**Income** at UK£43,883 was up 15% on 2007. The principal contributor to the increase was voluntary income (donations) which at UK£16,396 was up 42% on 2007. Voluntary income included UK£1,840 from the Gambia Birding Group, which on their winding up came to ABC in accordance with their constitution. That sum is ring-fenced to support projects in The Gambia. Of the total donations, UK£5,488 was given for specific

purposes or particular projects, and is shown as Restricted Funds in the accounts. The Club has small accounts in five African countries to permit members in those countries to pay their subscriptions in local currency. Those accounts are held and operated for ABC by a local NGO such as Nature Uganda. Income from those accounts was UK£764 in 2008. This year those accounts have been fully integrated, although the funds remain overseas and will be used in the country of origin.

**Expenditure** also increased in 2008 being 17.5% higher than 2007. The level of grants, UK£13,589, was 36% more than 2007. The rest of the increase arose mainly from the cost of producing and posting the Bulletin, bank charges for sending money overseas and an increase in the fees of the Independent Examiner. Expenditure from the overseas accounts totalled UK£1,037, of which UK£993 came from the South Africa account to support a local project.

**Balances** Net income was UK£4,197 and the net assets at the end of 2008 amounted to UK£27,411. In addition, the Club holds other funds relating to memberships paid in advance and similar items, so that the total cash at bank amounts to UK£46,935.

**Reserves policy** The Club has a policy requiring 50% of the annual operating cost to be held in the bank and the 2008 account is compliant with that policy. A copy of the full accounts will be made available on the Club's website.

**Independent Examiner** At the 2008 AGM members were assured, in response to a question from the floor, that the Independent Examiner (Messrs Burton Sweet) provided good value. Subsequently Burton Sweet sought to substantially increase their fee to a level that Council deemed excessive. Following consultation over fees Council decided that a change of Independent Examiner was justified. After a brief tender

exercise Council decided to employ Michael Goddard, a Chartered Certified Accountant, as Independent Examiner. Michael is a member of ABC, a keen birder and also acts as Independent Examiner for a similar organisation.

**Outlook** 2008 was a particularly good year financially, which seems unlikely to be matched in 2009. The impact of the international economic climate is uncertain but is likely to be negative. The value of donations is expected to fall because of the exceptional nature of some 2008 donations. Investment income, although always modest, is already down and is likely to reduce further. However, the Club is in a strong financial condition and can withstand a period of reduced income.

Acceptance of the accounts was proposed by Kay White, seconded by Martin Woodcock and approved unanimously.

## 6. Election of Trustees

The following were proposed by John Farnsworth, seconded by Russell Leavett and unanimously elected as Trustees of the Club: Phil Atkinson, Keith Betton, John Caddick, Clive Dickson, Chris Magin, Geoffrey Randall, Nigel Redman, Steph Tyler and Alan Williams.

## 7. Election of Executive Officers

The following were proposed by Duncan McDonald, seconded by Tony Gibbs and unanimously elected as Executive Officers of the Club:

Chairman: Keith Betton  
Vice Chairman: Phil Atkinson  
Treasurer: John Caddick  
Secretary: Geoff Randall

## 8. Appointment of Independent Examiner

Clive Dickson proposed, Alan Williams seconded and the meeting unanimously confirmed Michael Goddard as Independent Examiner for 2009.

## 9. Any Other Business

**Gough Island** Kay White informed the meeting of the threat to endemic bird species on Gough Island in the South Atlantic. The island is a UK Overseas Territory. The populations of Tristan Albatross *Diomedea (exulans) dabbenena* and other ground-nesting species are being decimated by introduced mice, which feed upon the living chicks. Kay asked that ABC and its members take action to urge the UK government to do more to support a mouse eradication programme. Alex Hipkiss of the Royal Society of the Protection Birds reported that the large size of Gough creates new challenges in terms of mouse eradication, but a programme for Gough is estimated at UK£2.5m. Throughout the UK Overseas Territories, there is a total of 32 threatened bird species requiring approximately UK£16m p.a. to achieve a suitable level of protection, whereas current government funding is just £1m. UK members were urged to write to their Members of Parliament and to DEFRA and Foreign & Commonwealth Office Ministers, whilst members in other European countries should write to their European MEPs urging them to put pressure on the UK government, and non-European members might write to BirdLife International. ABC will place information on the website and issue a draft letter on the AfricanBirding e-mail group.

**Nigeria Local Payment Scheme.** A request was made for the establishment of a local payment scheme in Nigeria. A suggestion was made that UNESCO coupons could be used by members in Nigeria and other countries to pay their subscription. Council undertook to investigate and implement if practicable.

## Close of Meeting.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 14.15 hrs.

## Summarised statement of financial activities—year ended 31 December 2008

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds 2008 £	Total Funds 2007 £
<b>Incoming resources</b>				
<i>Incoming resources from generated funds</i>				
Voluntary income	10,908	5,488	16,396	11,555
Activities for generating funds	5,982	-	5,982	6,170
Investment income	1,772	-	1,772	1,673
<i>Incoming resources from charitable activities</i>				
Subscriptions	19,733	-	19,733	18,762
<b>Total incoming resources</b>	<u>38,395</u>	<u>5,488</u>	<u>43,883</u>	<u>38,160</u>
<b>Resources expended</b>				
<i>Cost of generating funds</i>				
Fundraising/trading: cost of goods sold and other costs	1,431	-	1,431	1,636
<i>Charitable activities</i>				
Grants payable	10,884	2,705	13,589	9,958
Cost of activities in furtherance of charity's objectives	22,709	-	22,709	20,950
Governance costs	1,957	-	1,957	1,243
<b>Total resources expended</b>	<u>36,981</u>	<u>2,705</u>	<u>39,686</u>	<u>33,787</u>
<b>Net incoming resources</b>	<u>1,414</u>	<u>2,783</u>	<u>4,197</u>	<u>4,373</u>
<b>Total funds at 1 January 2008</b>	<u>23,214</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>23,214</u>	<u>18,841</u>
<b>Total funds at 31 December 2008</b>	<u>24,628</u>	<u>2,783</u>	<u>27,411</u>	<u>23,214</u>

The Charity has no recognised gains or losses other than the results for the year as set out above.  
 All of the activities of the charity are classed as continuing.

## Summarised balance sheet—year ended 31 December 2008

	2008 £	2007 £
<b>Current assets</b>		
Stock	1,795	2,647
Cash at bank	46,935	40,245
	48,730	42,892
<b>Creditors: amounts falling due within one year</b>	<u>(8,440)</u>	<u>(7,962)</u>
Net current assets	40,290	34,930
<b>Creditors: amounts falling due after one year</b>	<u>(12,879)</u>	<u>(11,716)</u>
<b>Net assets</b>	<u>27,411</u>	<u>23,214</u>
<b>Unrestricted funds</b>		
Designated Fund	-	3,000
Club Fund	18,223	15,681
Conservation Fund	6,405	4,533
	24,628	23,214
<b>Restricted funds</b>	<u>2,783</u>	<u>-</u>
	<u>27,411</u>	<u>23,214</u>

A full copy of the annual report of the Trustees and financial statements can be found on the ABC website at [www.africanbirdclub.org/club/aboutABC.html](http://www.africanbirdclub.org/club/aboutABC.html) or obtained from the Club Treasurer.

# Requests

## Colour-ringed Eurasian Hobbies

For the last five years, UK ringers have been colour-ringing Eurasian Hobbies *Falco subbuteo* and they would like African birders to look out for the birds on their wintering grounds. For many British migrants, much has been learnt through ringing, but to date there have been very few recoveries of British-ringed Hobbies anywhere. Less than 3% of the 2,000 birds ringed have been recovered and only three of those have been outside the UK. Although some satellite-tracking devices are now small enough for use on Hobbies (a Swedish bird was tracked to Zambia in 2005), the necessary technology is still expensive. To address this, since 2004 over 200 chicks have been colour-ringed using two rings on each leg below the knee. Five colours—black, blue, light green, red and white—are used in combination with a British Trust for Ornithology metal ring. To date, one confirmed re-sighting has been made in the UK. Any re-sightings in Africa would be extremely valuable, thus if you see a marked bird, please make a careful note of the colour ring combination on the left and right legs, and which colour is the uppermost on each leg. Sightings can either be reported online at: <http://blx1.bto.org/euring/lang/pages/rings.jsp?country=EN> or by contacting Jim Lennon, The Dovecote, Main Street, Flintham, Newark, Notts. NG23 5LA, UK, or by e-mail: [lennons@shearwater50.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:lennons@shearwater50.fsnet.co.uk). Observers

will receive feedback on any birds they find.

## Northern Bald Ibis in Morocco

The majority of birders and tour leaders who visit southern Morocco each year respect the importance of the last colony of the Critically Endangered Northern Bald Ibis *Geronticus eremita*, by searching for the birds away from the main breeding colony at Tamri. Unfortunately, a minority of visitors persist in approaching the breeding sites, and in some cases are even abusive to the ibis wardens whose duty it is to turn them away.

The wardens are locally appointed and trained, which is one key tangible benefit of the ibis to the village communities closest to the colonies and roosts, and one which indirectly links and informs the locals of the importance of the bird. So, when visitors ignore the by now well-known request to keep away, this is doubly destructive, both putting the birds at further risk, and undermining the morale of the dedicated wardening team.

It seems important to restate that the breeding sites simply cannot handle visiting birders at this stage, not so much because of direct disturbance to the birds, but because any increase in visits by foreigners would very quickly attract many local boys, in particular, who would remain at the site all day hoping to interact, etc., and this would soon become impossible to control. So please help

the Souss-Massa National Park team with support from SEO / BirdLife by complying, do make it a point to tell people in the region that you've come specially to see these birds, and do try to eat in the local cafes in Tamri or make other purchases there.

Given half a day in the Tamri area, very few birdwatchers go away disappointed, which can't be bad for one of the rarest species in the world? Also see the ABC website: [www.africanbirdclub.org/countries/Morocco/hotspots.html](http://www.africanbirdclub.org/countries/Morocco/hotspots.html)

*Chris Bowden, International Species Recovery Officer, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (BirdLife partner in the UK)*

## Rare Birds of Macaronesia

A new book, *Rare Birds of Macaronesia*, by Eduardo García-del-Rey is in an advanced stage of preparation, and the author is currently seeking images of as many rare migrant birds as possible photographed in the Azores, Canaries, Madeira, the Selvagens and the Cape Verdes. A free copy of the book will be given to each photographer whose work is included. If you can help, please contact: Eduardo García-del-Rey, C/Enrique Wolfson 11-3, 38004 S/C de Tenerife, Canary Islands, Spain. E-mail: [avesecot@teide.net](mailto:avesecot@teide.net)

## Advertise in the Bulletin of the ABC

Reach over 1,200 subscribers in more than 60 countries.

Advertisements should be submitted as high-resolution PDF, Quark or Pagemaker files, preferably by e-mail to the Advertising Officer – [advertising@africanbirdclub.org](mailto:advertising@africanbirdclub.org).

All advertisements must be prepaid: cheques made payable to the African Bird Club or payment made via the ABC website [www.africanbirdclub.org](http://www.africanbirdclub.org).

### Copy deadlines

March Bulletin 15 January  
August Bulletin 15 June



### Rates and technical details

are available on the ABC web site at:  
[www.africanbirdclub.org/club/advertise.html](http://www.africanbirdclub.org/club/advertise.html)



In *Bull. ABC* 16: 7, I noted that the Djibouti Francolin *Francolinus ochropectus* survey was then 'on hold'. I am pleased to report that the survey did go ahead in March 2009, and that Geoff & Hilary Welch and Houssein Rayaleh have already provided a report of their findings (see below).

To date, 2009 has been relatively quiet compared to 2008 in terms of funding applications. We have agreed to three awards although several more are 'in the pipeline'. We have received several interim reports from 2008 award recipients and these are summarised below.

Until recently, the Conservation Committee comprised Phil Atkinson, Paul Buckley, Lincoln Fishpool, Hazell Thompson and myself, but sadly Paul has now stood down. We thank him for all his work on behalf of ABC and in his stead welcome Chris Magin, also from Royal Society for the Protection of Birds's (RSPB) International Department. Chris is well known for, amongst other things, his work on vultures in India.

### Raptor training workshop in Egypt

Egypt lies on the major (eastern) West Palearctic flyway for raptors and soaring birds that migrate between their breeding grounds in Eurasia and wintering areas in eastern Africa. Several major bottlenecks along this flyway permit these birds to be counted during their migrations.

Such points in Egypt include the Zaranik area in north Sinai, the western Sinai Peninsula between El Tor and Ras Muhammad, Gebel Zeit on the Red Sea shore of Egypt's Eastern Desert, and the area 70 km south of the city of Suez. Counts at these sites have been published over the past 30 years, but few such surveys have involved daily counts throughout the migration season. There are, therefore, many gaps in our knowledge of the migration of raptors and soaring birds through Egypt, and few studies have furnished comparable data concerning any increases or decreases in numbers over the years. To plan and conduct intensive surveys according to current standards, a raptor survey and census techniques three-day training course was held in late April 2009 in order to develop the number of Egyptian bird observers who can undertake or assist surveys. The event took place at Ain

Sukhna on the Gulf of Suez coast. Among the tangible outputs of the course, reports on the raptor migration with recommendations will be submitted to the Ministry of Environment and the ABC, as well as proposals for future collaboration and research.

A total of UK£850 was requested from ABC and, despite some recent communication problems, is to be sent to the applicants in due course.

### Surveys of Black-tailed Cisticola in Angola

Michael Mills (of South Africa) and Martim Melo (Portugal) are to receive UK£500 for their study of Black-tailed Cisticola *Cisticola melanurus*, a scarce warbler confined to eastern Angola and western Democratic Republic of Congo. Black-tailed Cisticola is one of only four Data Deficient species in Angola, and is the least known of the four, with only a single recent published sight record. There is also much taxonomic uncertainty surrounding the species, which has been suggested to be conspecific with Nedicky *Cisticola fulvicapilla* and Long-tailed Cisticolas *C. angusticauda* or to be better placed in the genus *Apalis*. Currently, *C. melanurus* is regarded as Data Deficient by BirdLife International as it is almost unknown in life. Its behaviour and calls have been briefly described, but no recordings are available. The aim of the project is to spend c.2 weeks searching for the species at specimen localities, to gather data on behaviour, vocalisations and taxonomic affinities. If possible, sound-recordings will be made and birds will be mist-netted and blood samples taken, to be compared with samples from other cisticolas and related taxa, especially Nedicky and Long-tailed Cisticolas. Sound-recordings will be lodged at the National Sound Archive, at the British Library, London, UK. We are extremely grateful to ABC President, Tasso Leventis, for personally funding this project.

### Taita Falcon survey in South Africa

ABC provided an additional small sum of UK£300 towards a shortfall in costs for the helicopter survey of this rare falcon. Unfortunately, while the helicopter work proved extremely valuable, it was also much more expensive than



anticipated, with the final bill exceeding expectations by UK£650. An edited version of a report from Andrew Jenkins is as follows.

'In 2006 a two-week search was made of the southern escarpment mountains in South Africa for the elusive Taita Falcon. The aim was to add to the two known South African nest sites, and to derive an estimate of the national population of this very rare, cliff-loving species. We came away with two more nest sites and the satisfaction of having doubled the known population in South Africa. More or less the same bunch of raptorphiles returned to the escarpment in October 2008 to repeat the process. While our previous experience of surveying the area had been quite punishing, the niggling doubts we had about cliffs that we hadn't quite covered properly, and the new possibilities suggested by our finds in 2006, were sufficient to lure us back for more. On our second attempt we were able to 'squeeze' another three Taita Falcon nest sites out of this tough, seemingly impenetrable mountain habitat, bringing the known South African population to seven pairs, of which six were breeding in 2008. This comfortably positions the eastern escarpment region as a core area for Taita Falcons globally!.'

## Completed projects

### Djibouti Francolin survey, March 2009

Geoff & Hilary Welch and Houssein Rayaleh have provided the following summary. The Mabla Mountains, on the north side of the Gulf of Tadjoura, were surveyed on 22–25 March for the endemic and Critically Endangered Djibouti Francolin *Francolinus ochropectus* using both opportunistic searches and systematic transects. This was the first known visit to the area by ornithologists since November 1985. Although only part of the area was surveyed, 24 francolins were recorded, the majority singing males. Preliminary analysis of the transect results gave a density of 24.9 birds/km<sup>2</sup>, which is within the range of estimates produced through more detailed research by the World Pheasant Association in the francolin's stronghold of the Fôret du Day, c.60 km to the west. An examination of Google Earth images of the Mabla Mountains, together with

field observations, suggests that there is c.4,300 m<sup>2</sup> of potentially suitable habitat there, leading to an overall population estimate in Mabla of 108 birds, though further survey work is required.

The Mabla observations, in addition to confirming the continued presence of the francolin at the site and producing the first population estimate for the area, highlight the need for more research into the relationship between francolins and junipers. In the Fôret du Day, francolins are thought to be reliant on juniper forest at least seasonally, but junipers are effectively absent on Mabla where the dominant tree species are *Buxus*, *Acacia* and *Terminalia*. It is probable that habitat structure is at least as important as species composition in determining the francolin's distribution.



H. Rayaleh and G. Welch heading for Mabla campsite (H. Welch)

H. Rayadeh et G. Welch en route pour le camp dans les Monts Mabla (H. Welch)



Djibouti Francolin / Francolin somali *Francolinus ochropectus* (G. & H. Welch)



'Yellow-tailed' Pytilia / Beaumarquet 'à queue jaune'  
*Pytilia (melba) flavicaudata* (G. & H. Welch)



Djibouti Francolin / Francolin somali *Francolinus ochropectus* habitat (G. & H. Welch)

As well as visiting Mabla, six days were spent in the Bankoualé and Dittilou regions of the Fôret du Day, in known or potential francolin habitat below the main forest area, in an attempt to determine the 'outer limits' of the species' distribution. As at Mabla, these areas have little or no juniper but good stands of *Buxus*, and a minimum of 32 francolins was recorded.

Other significant records involved observations of 'Yellow-tailed' Pytilias *Pytilia (melba) flavicaudata* at both Mabla and the Fôret du Day, and poor-quality photographs were obtained of a female at Dittilou. The taxonomic status of these birds remains unclear. Three new species for Djibouti were also observed in the Fôret du Day: Cinereous Bunting *Emberiza cineracea*, Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris* and Red-rumped Swallow *Cercropis daurica*.

A detailed report is in preparation. In addition to a UK£500 grant from the ABC Conservation Fund, the survey was supported by the RSPB (Sabbatical Panel and Africa Small Grants Programme), the Birdfair / RSPB Research Fund for Endangered Species and an anonymous member of the World Pheasant Association.

## Reports

### Conservation of endemic species in Yala Swamp—progress report

ABC awarded UK£850 to Allai Orimba for his ambitious project in Kenya's Yala Swamp. If anyone would like a copy of the full report, please contact me. Allai has informed us of the following. 'Until now the project has involved the improvement of knowledge capacity by enabling local people to identify profitable activities, such as bee-keeping and poultry keeping, so that they can farm and co-exist with birds and other species. It has raised and invested funds and obtained valuable information for effecting the conservation of the natural resource. The project team has established the necessary organisations / institutions and it has involved experts to give local people a better understanding of conservation management policies. Some of the project's more specific successes include the following. (1) Enhancing awareness of the sustainable utilisation of natural forest through cooperation from other partner organisations. (2) Four farmers



Group members during a monitoring session (Allai Orimba)

Une séance de 'monitoring' dans le marécage de Yala, Kenya (Allai Orimba)



have shown interest in abandoning hill-farming, whilst one farmer has decided to leave part of his farm for endemic birds due to the project's work. (3) Tree nurseries for both fruit trees and indigenous trees have been established in at least five schools. (4) Community members have planted papyrus in bare areas in an effort to rehabilitate the land and prevent its degradation. (5) Ten tour guides have been trained as a means of promoting ecotourism. (6) An awareness-raising programme has been created focused particularly on schools. (7) Trees have been given to schools and other community members at a subsidised price. Overall, by becoming closely involved with the community, the Friends of Yala Swamp organisation has developed a relationship of trust and sense of common purpose which should act as an impetus for conservation of the swamp.

Future plans involve exploring holistic and integrated approaches to developing further links with the local community, including motivating local people to take responsibility for their natural resources without damaging the habitat of the endemic birds; compile a Yala Swamp bird checklist; conduct exchange visits with other local groups working in nearby swamps; and continuing the awareness programme.

### Hinde's Babbler study

In 2004 ABC funded John Musina from Kenya to survey Hinde's Babblers *Turdooides hindei*. A full report is awaited, but John reported recently that he had completed the survey, that he had established transects in Mukurweini and he also had trained several Site Support Group members in identification, ageing and counting techniques.

### A survey of the Akanyaru wetlands in Rwanda

This survey of an unprotected Important Bird Area (IBA), by Claudien Nsabagasani *et al.*, and kindly sponsored by Hyde-Lascelles, was conducted in July–December 2008. The survey updated the checklist of the birds and mammals of Akanyaru, estimated the abundance of waterbirds at Lake Kamudeberi, and assessed the conservation status of the birds in accordance with IUCN and CITES. Different threats affect-

ing the wetland were also documented. Some 111 bird species were recorded during point counts, opportunistic sampling and total count methods. Madagascar Pond Heron *Ardeola idae*, a globally threatened species, and four bird species listed by CITES (Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiaca*, Hadada Ibis *Bostrychia hagedash*, Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* and Sacred Ibis *Threskiornis aethiopicus*) were recorded. Additionally, seven species of mammals were recorded in papyrus and Hippopotamuses *Hippopotamus amphibius* were observed on the Akanyaru River. The information obtained on the use of the swamp and various attitudes of the people towards the swamp show that the wetland is exposed to serious threats. Akanyaru River is attacked by invasive water hyacinths, while the wetland is threatened mainly by human activities includ-



Papyrus Gonolek / Gonolek des papyrus *Laniarius mufumbiri* (A. Riley / Rockjumper Birding Tours)



S. Nsengimana (left) and C. Nsabagasani (right) at Akanyaru (E. Hakizimana)



ing agriculture, hunting, burning, extraction of vegetation, uncontrolled fishing, etc. The project calculated the remaining areas of papyrus in Akanyaru at 2,471 ha. Papyrus is habitat for threatened bird species such as Madagascar Pond Heron and Papyrus Gonolek *Laniarius mufumbiri*, and mammals such as Sitatunga *Tragelaphus spekii*. The area of papyrus is decreasing because of human activities. Lake Kamudeberi, a breeding site for Rufous-bellied Heron *Ardeola rufiventris*, is surrounded by cultivation and people are still fishing and hunting ducks there. Because the main reasons for the misuse of the wetlands are poverty and lack of coordination in the use of the resource, the project has recommended that: the survey be extended to different seasons and covers other biodiversity; fishermen and handicraft-makers be organised into cooperatives registered by local authorities; cattle farming be modernised, which would be more productive and should solve the problem of animal protein scarcity; local people should be encouraged to develop other sources of proteins such as smaller livestock, as well as bee-keeping, mushroom cultivation, etc.; and Rwanda's Organic Law should be strictly observed and enforced.

### Ranger-based monitoring programme of oxpeckers in Kenya

Considerable progress was made in meeting this project's important objectives. A team of five rangers was selected and, following the receipt of

four pairs of binoculars from NatureKenya, via the RSPB, three training sessions were undertaken. Additional support of six binoculars and one GPS is expected from Idea Wild. Given the background of the officers, the preliminary focus was on the fundamentals of ornithology, which included basic bird identification skills, ornithological data collection, and the use and maintenance of binoculars. This was followed by two field sessions to enable the officers to practice bird identification. Unexpected logistical setbacks hindered further progress within the stated timeframe. This was due to the fact that the officers are allocated other duties.

Preparation of a training manual with special focus on oxpeckers *Buphagus* spp. was initiated. It is hoped that an all-encompassing manual on monitoring common and easily identified birds will be produced later. The expected support from the Research Division of the Kenya Wildlife Service was not forthcoming because of ongoing budget cuts that has targeted, among other things, capacity-building programmes. Despite the initial progress, the project was unable to expand the scope of coverage and engage more officers, and it might not be possible to meet this objective in the short term.

*Steph Tyler, on behalf of the  
Conservation Committee*

# Africa Round-up



## General

### More Critically Endangered birds than ever before

BirdLife International's latest evaluation of the world's birds has revealed that more species than ever are threatened with extinction: 1,227 species (12%) are now classified as globally threatened, but nonetheless when conservation action is put in place species can be saved. "In global terms, things continue to get worse, but there are some real conservation success stories this year to give us hope and point the way forward", said Dr Leon Bennun, BirdLife's Director of Science and Policy. The 2009 Red List update now lists 192 species of bird as Critically Endangered, the highest threat category, a total of two more than in the 2008 update, including the recently discovered species Gorgeted Puffleg *Eriocnemis isabellae* and Sidamo Lark *Heteromirafrida sidamoensis* from the Liben Plain of Ethiopia, which has been listed in this category due to changes in land use, and is in danger of becoming mainland Africa's first bird extinction. BirdLife has also noted that common birds are becoming less common. "Across Africa, widespread birds of prey are also disappearing at an alarming rate, and emblematic species such as Bateleur *Terathopius ecaudatus* and Martial Eagle *Polemaetus bellicosus* have been uplisted as a result. These declines are mirrored in many species, in every continent", said Jez Bird, BirdLife's Global Species Programme Officer.

Source: BirdLife International website  
14 May 2009

### African IBA network 'robust' in the face of climate change

Twenty-first century climate change could see the ranges of many African bird species moving beyond the boundaries of the sites established

for their protection, raising the spectre of even higher extinction rates than those currently projected. However, some sites are also likely to gain species whose ranges currently lie beyond the site's borders. New research has examined the balance between these effects, and shows that under projected climate change over the next century, the African Important Bird Area (IBA) network will be an essential tool for conserving the region's breeding species. A team of scientists from BirdLife International, the universities of Copenhagen and Durham, and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (BirdLife in the UK), have modelled impacts of climate change on the distributions of terrestrial breeding birds in sub-Saharan African. They have shown that turnover of species in the continent's IBA network is likely to be substantial, but the network as a whole remains robust under projected climate change. Their paper, 'Projected impacts of climate change on a continent-wide protected area network', has been published in *Ecology Letters*. Nonetheless, it remains to be seen whether the IBA network will prove as 'robust' in the face of the continent's other great human and environmental challenge, namely that of steadily rising population. Furthermore, it is unclear how the effects of climate change will play out in determining human migrations, both within and outwith Africa.

Source: [www.birdlife.org/news/news/2009/06/africa\\_climate\\_change.html](http://www.birdlife.org/news/news/2009/06/africa_climate_change.html)

### Revised generic and species limits for many Old World finches

The authors of a recent molecular study, Billy Nguembock and colleagues, who sampled both mitochondrial and nuclear genes, have built on previous genetic work

on Old World finches. Within the traditionally large genera *Serinus* and *Carduelis*, the obtained phylogenetic structure corresponds well with the subdivisions suggested by H. E. Wolters nearly 30 years ago, using traditional methods. Nguembock *et al.* found support for Wolter's generic subdivisions: *Ochrospiza* (for White-bellied Canary *S. dorsostriatus*, Yellow-fronted Canary *S. mozambicus*, Lemon-breasted Canary *S. citrinipeplus* and White-rumped Seedeater *S. leucopygia*), *Dendrospiza* (for Black-faced Canary *S. capistratus*, Southern Citril *S. hypostictus* and African Citril *S. citrinelloides*) and *Crithagra* (for Yellow Canary *S. flaviventris*, Streaky Seedeater *S. striolatus*, Yellow-browed Seedeater *S. whytii* and Thick-billed Seedeater *S. burtoni*) for *Serinus*, and *Chloris* (for European Greenfinch *C. chloris* and other Oriental greenfinches), *Spinus* (for Eurasian Siskin *C. spinus* and Pine Siskin *C. pinus*), *Sporagra* (for the South American siskins), *Pseudomiritis* (for the American Goldfinch *C. psaltria*), *Acanthis* (for two redpolls) and *Linaria* (for Common Linnet *C. cannabina*) for *Carduelis*. It is important to note that (a) quite some relevant taxa were not sampled by this study (for instance, Warsangli Linnet *C. johannis*) and (b) that the endings of some specific names will change on transferral to other genera from *Carduelis* or *Serinus* (for instance, when placed in *Ochrospiza*, White-bellied Canary becomes *O. dorsostriata*). At the specific level, the authors draw attention to several cases of significant genetic divergence within traditional species suggesting incipient speciation in, for instance, Oriole Finch *Linurgus olivaceus* (nominate *olivaceus* and *L. o. kiliensis* are very different, but other taxa within this species were not sampled), *Serinus mozambicus* (high genetic divergence was found in sam-

ples from Uganda, race *barbatus*, and Cameroon, race *puncigula*, but most taxa were not sampled) and *S. burtoni* (again not all taxa were sampled, but Nguembock *et al.* recommend that *burtoni*, *kilimensis* and *melanochrous* be assigned specific status).

Source: *Mol. Phyl. & Evol.* 51, pp. 169–181

### Remote-sensing potentially enables better monitoring of IBAs

Many of Africa's over 1,200 Important Bird Areas (IBAs) are threatened by habitat degradation and a high proportion possesses no legal protection. Graeme Buchanan *et al.* used remote-sensing data to assess the conservation priorities in these areas. Land cover differed significantly between IBAs and their buffer zones, with agriculture and deforestation being the most important threats especially in those IBAs containing forest or scrub. Human population was found to be no lower in IBAs than in their surrounds, but was about three times higher than the average for the whole of Africa south of the Sahara. The authors suggest that because changes in land cover are the most important threats, remote-sensing could play an important role in monitoring African IBAs and would permit monitoring of a wider range of sites than might be possible using traditional ground-based methods.

Source: *Bird Conserv. Intern.* 19, pp. 49–61



White-backed Vulture / Vautour africain  
*Gyps africanus* (Hugh Chittenden)

### White-backed Vulture numbers are limited by humans

Andrew Bamford and colleagues have identified that direct and indirect disturbances by humans are the most important factors limiting nest-site distribution of White-backed Vultures *Gyps africanus*. Suitable habitat protection needs to be put in place as all vulture species are actually or potentially at risk from poaching, it is thought primarily for their use in traditional medicine.

Source: *Ibis* 151, pp. 51–62

### North Africa

#### African Desert Sparrow is a separate species?

Distinct differences in morphology, including mensural data, and especially dramatic divergence in the plumage of females has led to a recommendation that the African and Asian populations of Desert Sparrow *Passer simplex* be treated as separate biological (as well as phylogenetic) species. The team involved in the research suggest that the better known African birds retain the traditional vernacular name applied to the complex, Desert Sparrow, whilst Asian birds might be known by the 'moniker' Zarudny's Sparrow *Passer zarudnyi*, in honour of the taxon's original collector and one of the foremost biological explorers of Iran and Central Asia. Despite extensive specimen-based research, the authors

of the study were unable to reach a clear conclusion concerning the necessity of retaining two names for African populations (a subject that had drawn disparate views for many decades) and thus the validity of the name *P. s. saharae*.

Source: *Dutch Birding* 31, pp. 139–158

### Yellow-billed Kite in Morocco

Arnoud van den Berg has reported the first Yellow-billed Kite *Milvus (milvus) aegyptius* in Morocco and north-west Africa, between Marrakech and Ouarzazate, on 8 April 2008, which has already been accepted by the Moroccan Rare Birds Committee. It also seems to be the first record of this form, which is not universally afforded species status, in the Western Palearctic outside Egypt. Two photographs are presented with the article documenting the record.

Source: *Dutch Birding* 31, pp. 172–173

### Status of olivaceous warblers in south-east Morocco

Since the recent well-recognised split of Western Olivaceous *Hippolais opaca* and Eastern Olivaceous Warblers *H. pallida*, the status of the two species in Africa has required elucidation. Volker Salewski *et al.* studied the situation in south-east Morocco, in the Erfoud / Merzouga region, where Eastern Olivaceous Warbler is represented by the subspecies *reiseri*, in May 2007. The team found that both species occupy *Tamarix* thickets, but that *H. opaca* showed little evidence of territoriality or breeding in this region, except in the best-vegetated oases, whereas *H. pallida* is a common breeder at least at some sites.

Source: *Br. Birds* 102, pp. 116–121

### First successful breeding of Greater Flamingo in Algerian Sahara

In 2009, a small colony of 200 Greater Flamingos *Phoenicopterus (ruber) roseus* bred successfully for the first time at El Goléa, in the central Algerian Sahara. This constitutes the third successful breeding record of the species for the country and El



Desert Sparrow / Moineau blanc  
*Passer simplex* (George Olioso)



Greater Flamingos / Flamants roses  
*Phoenicopterus (ruber) roseus*  
(Mark Anderson)

Goléa becomes the second breeding site after Ezzemoul, on the eastern Hauts Plateaux. At the latter site, breeding was documented in 2005 and 2006, and the colony of over 11,000 birds produced 9,050 fledglings over those two years. Breeding failure at El Goléa in the past was mainly due to egg collecting, which caused the birds to desert the nest site. In 2009, efficient monitoring ensured that the colony was not disturbed.

Source: *Alauda* 77, pp. 139–143

#### New record of Red-crested Pochard in Algeria

During a census on the Garaet Hadj-Tahar, Skikda, an important wintering area for waterbirds (see *Bull. ABC* 15: 71–76), a pair of Red-crested Pochards *Netta rufina* was found in the company of c.500 Ferruginous Ducks *Aythya rufina* on 25 December 2008; there are few recent records of Red-crested Pochards for the country, with only eight mentioned by Isenmann & Moali (2000. *Birds of Algeria*) for the period 1966–97.

Source: *Alauda* 77, p. 66

#### Glossy Ibis breeding in Tunisia

Breeding of Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* in Tunisia was documented for the first time in 2008, when 20 pairs nested at the freshwater reservoir of Lebna, near Cap Bon, in the north-east of the country. In total, 21 young of c.10 days of age were observed in seven nests. Previously, breeding was suspected in 1990 only, when a group of ten birds, including juveniles, was observed at Kelibia/Sousse on 19 July. Since 2001,

annual totals of Glossy Ibis have steadily increased, reaching 53 in the pre-breeding and 347 in the post-breeding season in 2008.

Source: *Alauda* 77, pp. 115–120

#### Recent observations in Libya

Interest in the ornithology of this North African country has been enjoying something of a minor upsurge in recent years following a couple of decades of relative neglect. One recent publication, by Jens Hering, reports the results of a visit to Libya in December 2007–January 2008. Some of the interesting observations include unprecedented winter numbers of Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*, White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*, Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*, Common Coot *Fulica atra* and Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus* in the north-central Sahara, as well as several first winter records of wader species in the Fezzan. Other novel records from the latter area include Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*, Eurasian Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*, several calling Water Rails *Rallus aquaticus* and the first Garganey *Anas querquedula* in this region.

Source: *Vogelwarte* 47, pp. 5–22



Black-necked Grebe / Grèbe à cou noir  
*Podiceps nigricollis* (Peter Ryan)

#### First Site Support Group established in Egypt

Nature Conservation Egypt (NCE; the BirdLife partner in Egypt) has established their first Site Support Group (SSG) in the country, at Lake Qarun Protected Area. The group comprises a coalition of local and national members, including fishermen (the majority of the local population), and has already halted a large construction company from

dumping waste in the lake. Local people are now coming forward with further reports of environmental law violations. Dr Kohar Garo Varjabedian from NCE said that “Even though the idea of SSGs is still new in Egypt, it is very promising and NCE hopes to start applying the concept in other places in the near future”. Future plans include various awareness raising and education activities, working with more local schoolchildren, distributing a new booklet and actively protecting the lake for the conservation of migratory birds.

Source: *BirdLife International press release, May 2009*

#### Waterbird conservation in North Africa gets a boost

A three-year project on ‘Strengthening waterbird and wetland conservation capacities in North Africa (WetCap)’ was launched in March 2009. The project will build capacity of wetland management at key sites in Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt and Mauritania. It will also promote the sustainable use of wetlands for the benefit of local people by providing clean water and opportunities for fishing, agriculture, recreation and tourism. The WetCap project is linked to the ongoing African-Eurasian Flyway Project, also known as ‘Wings over Wetlands (WOW)’. It will be implemented under the umbrella of the United Nations Environment Programme Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA), in cooperation with its project partners BirdLife International, SEO/BirdLife (Spanish BirdLife partner), Wetlands International and the Ramsar Convention. The WetCap project will provide training of trainers and conservation professionals from the five countries to improve the conservation status and management of waterbirds at local key wetland sites. Gap-filling surveys and monitoring field missions will be carried out in all five countries during the second and third years of the project.

Source: *AEWA press release, March 2009*

## West & Central Africa

### Trans-boundary park declared

In mid-May 2009, the presidents of Sierra Leone and Liberia met in the Gola Forest, to announce a new Trans-boundary Peace Park, which will protect one of the largest remnant blocks of intact forest in the Upper Guinea region. President Ernest Bai Koroma of Sierra Leone said, "The long-term benefits of the conservation of the Gola Forests far outweigh the short-term benefits of extraction and destruction. As I have said since I was elected in 2007, the Gola Forests will become a National Park in Sierra Leone and mining will not be permitted". The Peace Park unites the Gola Forest Reserve in Sierra Leone (75,000 ha) and the Lofa and Foya Forest Reserves in Liberia (80,000 ha and 100,000 ha, respectively), with additional forest to provide corridors for the movement of wildlife between them. Local communities in Sierra Leone, through their traditional chiefs and Members of Parliament, have expressed their support for the project. The work to establish the park has involved the two national BirdLife Partners (Conservation Society of Sierra Leone and Society for the Conservation of Nature in Liberia), the RSPB (BirdLife in the UK), Vogelbescherming (BirdLife in The Netherlands), working together with the Forest Development Authority (FDA) of Liberia, and the Forestry Division in Sierra Leone. Furthermore, the BirdLife Partnership, which is already working on a 4.2 million Euro project to protect Sierra Leone's Gola Forest,

funded by the European Union and the French government, has secured an additional 3.2 million Euros to establish the 200,000-ha protected area. The balance of the monies needed will be provided by the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund, and the Sustainable & Thriving Environments for West African Regional Development Program of the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the US Forest Service, International Programs.

*Source: BirdLife International press release, May 2009*

### Sustaining capacity in Upper Guinea

A new three-year BirdLife project to conserve and manage protected areas in the Upper Guinea forest of West Africa has been launched. The project focuses on protected area managers, young graduates and local community groups in order to build capacity for conservation in Ghana, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea and Sierra Leone. Key emerging conservation issues like climate change will be addressed, whilst young graduates will be supported as will Site Support Groups at places such Sapo National Park and Lake Piso Forest Reserve in Liberia, the Gola Forest Reserves in Sierra Leone and Azagny National Park in Côte d'Ivoire. The project is being funded by a US\$600,000 grant from the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund.

*Source: BirdLife International press release, May 2009*

### Waders in the Inner Niger Delta, Mali

A French team, writing in *Malimbus*, has reported the results of nine expeditions to Mali between 1998 and 2008 to study numbers of Palearctic and Afrotropical shorebirds wintering there especially in the important Inner Niger Delta. They estimate that between half a million and 1,200,000 waders of 34 more numerous species winter in the country, of which the delta is of international importance for the following species (totals in parentheses are for the entire country): Black-

winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* (25,000–35,000), Egyptian Plover *Pluvianus aegyptius* (1,000–10,000), Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola* (10,000–50,000), Grey Pratincole *G. cinerea* (500–5,000), Kittlitz's Plover *Charadrius pecuarius* (20,000–30,000), White-fronted Plover *C. marginatus* (1,000–5,000), Black-headed Plover *Vanellus tectus* (1,000–10,000), Spur-winged Plover *V. spinosus* (50,000–200,000), Little Stint *Calidris minuta* (100,000–300,000), Ruff *Philomachus pugnax* (250,000–350,000), Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* (20,000–45,000), Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus* (5,000–10,000) and Greenshank *T. nebularia* (1,000–5,000).

*Source: Malimbus 31, pp. 1–19*

### Surveys in southern Ghana

Two recent collecting expeditions to southern Ghana, in the years 2000 and 2003, by a team from Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, working in cooperation with members of the Ghana Wildlife Division, not only reported a number of species of both national and global conservation importance, but also obtained specimens of several taxa for which few documented records in the country exist. Amongst the latter were species such as Blue-headed Bee-eater *Merops muelleri*, Olivaceous Flycatcher *Muscicapa olivascens*, Tessmann's Flycatcher *M. tessmanni* and Rufous-winged Illadopsis *Illadopsis rufescens*, whilst species of global concern encountered by the team included Yellow-headed Picathartes *Picathartes gymnocephalus* and Green-tailed Bristlebill *Bleda eximius*.

*Source: Malimbus 31, pp. 28–46*

### Huge swallow roost in Nigeria continues to be monitored

The huge Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* roost at Ebbaken-Boje village, Cross River State, Nigeria, which numbers millions of birds, continues to be monitored by Pierfrancesco Micheloni, who has done so since 1995. Due to his efforts, the villagers have stopped killing swallows for food and burning the tall grass in which the roost is situated. Early



Gola Forest / La forêt de Gola  
(Alistair Gammell)

in 2009, Pierfrancesco ringed 3,000 Barn Swallows and retrapped 16 birds that had been ringed in Spain (eight), Belgium (three), Italy (three), France (one) and Croatia (one).

Source: P. Micheloni in litt. to African Birding, March 2009

### Grey-necked Picathartes conservation

A recently completed study of the globally Vulnerable Grey-necked Picathartes *Picathartes oreas* in the Mbam Minkom-Kala Important Bird Area in Cameroon has provided new insights into the species' conservation. Radio transmitters were attached to the tails of six birds.

"This study estimated the abundance and distribution of nest sites in the IBA, and served to highlight the imminent likelihood of destruction due to agricultural encroachment and illegal timber exploitation", said the study's author Dr Awa Taku of the Cameroon Biodiversity Conservation Society (BirdLife in Cameroon), who added that "These results have important implications in decision making to delimit forest boundaries and core areas for protection in the development of management plans".

Source: BirdLife International press release, May 2009

### Two new national parks in Cameroon

In November 2008, the Cameroon government, with help from the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), created Takamanda National Park, which now forms part of an important trans-boundary protected area with Nigeria's Cross River National Park and protects the world's most endangered ape, the Cross River Gorilla *Gorilla gorilla diehli*, which numbers fewer than 300 individuals and ranges across 11 scattered sites.

The northernmost population of western lowland gorillas, numbering 600 individuals, finds refuge within the borders of another new protected area in Cameroon, Deng Deng National Park. Measuring c.580 km<sup>2</sup>, this park also supports significant populations of Chimpanzees *Pan troglodytes*, Elephants *Loxodonta africana*, Buffaloes *Synacerus caffer* and Bongos *Tragelaphus euryceros*. The creation of Deng Deng National Park is the result of years of conservation planning, including the first gorilla population surveys in the former forest reserve in 2002. Additional support for the conservation of Deng Deng's biodiversity will come from the French government, which has agreed to provide €735,000 to fund the first three-year period of the project, to be jointly implemented by WCS and the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife.

Source: Wildlife Conservation Society website, June 2009

### Renewed hope for indigenous people in Cameroon

Indigenous people in Cameroon living in the environs of Ngovayang Massif Forest Important Bird Area (IBA) are supporting the launch of a new five-year project to continue BirdLife's work to improve livelihoods and biodiversity conservation. "The new project aims to reduce the disparities in development and access to resource rights between the local hunter-gatherers, and their neighbours", said Dr Paulinus Ngeh (BirdLife's West Africa Sub-regional Coordinator). "We are also looking to improve the management and use of natural resources of the Ngovayang Massif Forest IBA". The Cameroon Biodiversity Conservation Society (BirdLife in Cameroon) will be undertaking activities such as helping to provide access to clean water, and improved housing, health and education. The project is funded by the Department for International Development of the UK government.

Source: BirdLife International press release, May 2009

### Additions to the Chad bird list

Pierre Bulens and Bob Dowsett have reported the presence of three bird species new to the avifauna of Chad, based on observations by the first-named author at Aouk in the south of the country in February 2003. The species involved are Blue-breasted Kingfisher *Halcyon malimbica*, Yellow-throated Leaflove *Chlorocichla flavigollis* and Spectacled Weaver



Blue-breasted Kingfisher / Martin-chasseur à poitrine bleue *Halcyon malimbica* (Dick Forsman)



Spectacled Weaver / Tisserin à lunettes *Ploceus ocularis* (Hugh Chittenden)

*Ploceus ocularis*. Interesting distributional records for an additional eight species are also reported.

Source: Malimbus 31, pp. 57–60

### Search for Shelley's Crimsonwing

Shelley's Crimsonwing *Cryptospiza shelleyi* inhabits the montane forests of the Albertine Rift in Central Africa and is currently classified as Vulnerable by BirdLife International. Preliminary research conducted by the Rare Finch Conservation Group (RFCG) suggests that this rare and elusive species might be more threatened than previously thought. Searches in several areas of its known habitat over the past five years have found little evidence of this colourful estrildid, although one individual was trapped during a bird survey of Mt Tshiaberimu, an annex of Virunga National Park in Congo-Kinshasa, in February 2008. A research grant to determine the status of Shelley's Crimsonwing has been announced by the RFCG and the Hans Hoheisen Charitable Trust.

Sources: www.rarefinch.co.za; Africa Geographic, 17(5) pp. 14–15

## Atlantic Islands

### Relationships of two endemic Canarian pigeons

The phylogenetic origin of the two endemic *Columba* pigeons in the Canary Islands—Dark-tailed Laurel (Bolle's) *C. bollii* and Laurel Pigeon *C. junoniae*—has been investigated by Javier Gonzalez *et al.* from the University of Heidelberg. Dark-tailed Laurel Pigeon is most closely related to the familiar Woodpigeon *C. palumbus* of mainland Europe and probably arrived on the islands within the last c.5 million years, whereas Laurel Pigeon is much older, lying close to the base of a clade wherein lie many other species of *Columba*.

Source: *J. Ornithol.* 150, pp. 357–367

### Black Crake struck from the Western Palearctic list

Rafael Matias, a Portuguese researcher, has described the rediscovery of a forgotten specimen that was originally identified as a Black Crake *Amaurornis flavirostris*, and collected on Madeira in January 1895, which until now stood as the sole record of this species for the Western Palearctic. However, examination of the specimen has revealed its true identity to be a Lesser Moorhen *Gallinula angulata*, the first record for Macaronesia, and the fourth for the Western Palearctic.

Source: *Bull. Br. Ornithol. Cl.* 129, pp. 116–119



Lesser Moorhen / Gallinule africaine  
*Gallinula angulata* (Hugh Chittenden)

### Eurasian Coot: a new breeding species for Madeira

One of Madeira's best-known wetlands, Lugar de Baixo, has recently produced a new breeding species for the archipelago, when in mid-May

2009 two resident birdwatchers observed and photographed a pair of Eurasian Coots *Fulica atra* feeding four recently hatched young.

Source: Hugo Romano in litt. to *African Birding May 2009*



St Helena Plover / Pluvier de Sainte-Hélène *Charadrius sanctaehelenae*  
(Peter Berglin)



St Helena Plover / Pluvier de Sainte-Hélène *Charadrius sanctaehelenae*  
(Peter Berglin)

### St Helena Plover now Critically Endangered

Neil McCulloch surveyed St Helena Plover (Wirebird) *Charadrius sanctaehelenae* in 2005–06 and found that there are only c.235 individuals extant, representing a 40% decline over five years. This decline is associated with degradation of the bird's favoured grassland habitat, in turn due to reduced livestock numbers, although predation by introduced mammals and birds is likely to be a factor as well, although as yet the latter threat has not been quantified.

Source: *Bird Conserv. Intern.* 19, pp. 33–48

### More on seasonal segregation of storm petrel breeding populations

We recently reported the naming of a cryptic 'new' *Oceanodroma* storm petrel species in the Azores, by Mark Bolton and his co-workers (*cf. Bull. ABC* 16: 18). Now, a team, also including Mark Bolton, has found

that the population of Band-rumped Storm Petrel *Oceanodroma castro* segregate seasonally, a condition that was previously unsuspected at this locality. Egg laying occurs in two discrete periods, in late March–early July ('cool season') and in late September–late December ('hot season'). Most birds breed during the 'cool' season and their breeding success is substantially higher than that of those nesting in the 'hot' season. These results parallel the findings from similar studies of sympatric seasonal populations in both the Azores and Galápagos.

Source: *Bull. Br. Ornithol. Cl.* 129, pp. 92–97

## East Africa

### Important fattening areas in eastern and north-east Africa

Many locations in eastern and north-east Africa are important fattening areas for long-distance migrants in either or both autumn and spring. The body mass of 12 passerine species was studied by Elizabeth Yohannes *et al.*, to try and identify both the migration strategies and the main fattening areas used. They looked at sites in Europe, the Middle East, Arabia and eastern Africa. Body mass changes were observed to correlate well with the strategies that individual species are known to adopt during both their southward (autumn) and northward (spring) migrations, and the team was able to show where each species accumulates fuel reserves for their migrations.

Source: *J. Ornithol.* 150, pp. 369–382

### Survey of Ethiopian endemics

A six-week field study of White-tailed Swallow *Hirundo megaensis* and Stresemann's (Ethiopian) Bush Crow *Zavattariornis stresemanni* was conducted in August 2005 by Richard Mellanby and colleagues to identify their main habitat requirements and conservation status. The swallow was recorded on c.5% of transects and point counts, and the bush-crow on just over 15%. Both species showed

a strong preference for *Acacia* and *Commiphora* thornbush areas, and avoided broadleaf woodland, with the bush-crow also avoiding farmland and villages (unlike the swallow). Concern over steep declines in bush crow numbers revealed by roadside counts were found to be partially unfounded, as the main detrimental habitat changes were more dramatic along roads than elsewhere, but nonetheless the species remains under threat from agricultural expansion and encroachment.

Source: *Bird Conserv. Intern.* 18, pp. 395–412

### Waterbird surveys in Somaliland

In 2008, a survey led by Abdi Jama of Nature Somaliland contributed the first data for Somaliland to the African Waterbird Census (AfWC). The survey covered the Red Sea coast of Somaliland and provided data and a video on waterbirds, coastal wetland habitats and some human activities in the area. In 2009, three local organisations (Nature Somaliland, Somaliland Wildlife Society and Ecofocus) collaborated and surveyed waterbirds at the Ziyara and Berbera sites. The AfWC is coordinated by Wetlands International. It is one of the longest running continental biodiversity monitoring programmes and continues to grow in terms of number of sites covered and the number of countries participating.

Source: *BirdLife International Africa Partnership e-bulletin* 19, p. 3

### Indian Ocean Islands

#### Wedge-tailed Shearwater breeds again on Denis

Wedge-tailed Shearwater *Puffinus pacificus* was found to have re-established a small colony on Denis, Seychelles, in November 2007, following the eradication of rats on the island in 2002. Some burrows were found, but proof of breeding only came in October 2008, when a shearwater incubating an egg was photographed.

Source: <http://denisiland.blogspot.com/search?q=shearwater>

#### Mauritius Kestrel habitat use

Knowledge of habitat use by juvenile Mauritius Kestrels *Falco punctatus* is potentially vital for the species' long-term conservation. A team led by Malcolm Burgess at Reading University, UK, radio-tagged 13 individuals for the period immediately post-fledging. Native and semi-invaded forest proved to be consistently the most preferred habitat whilst agricultural areas were used significantly less. The kestrels appear less dependent on native forest than previously thought, with a lack of mature isolated trees seemingly the main reason for agricultural areas being a less-preferred habitat.

Source: *Ibis* 151, pp. 63–76

#### Saving one of the world's rarest raptors

The Critically Endangered Madagascar Fish Eagle *Haliaeetus vociferoides* is considered to be one of the rarest birds of prey and at significant risk of extinction. In the most recent census, only 222 adults were recorded and a total breeding population of no more than 100–120 pairs was estimated. A recent study has compared levels of this raptor's genetic diversity, based on 47 microsatellite loci, with its sister species, African Fish Eagle *H. vocifer*, and 16 of these loci were also characterised in White-tailed Eagle *H. albicilla* and Bald Eagle *H. leucocephalus*. Overall, extremely low genetic diversity was found in Madagascar Fish Eagle compared to the other surveyed species. The authors found that Madagascar Fish Eagles have maintained a small effective population for hundreds to thousands of years, and that its low level of neutral genetic diversity is not the result of a recent bottleneck. They recommend that efforts to prevent the species' extinction should prioritise maintaining its habitat and reducing direct and indirect human persecution.

Given current rates of deforestation in Madagascar, the authors also recommend that the population be expanded to occupy a larger range, which will assist the bird to survive any exposure to stochastic factors (e.g. climate and disease) that

always threaten a species with such a small population.

Source: *Mol. Ecol.* 18, pp. 54–63

#### Mascarene White-eyes in Madagascar

An interesting piece of ornithological detective work by Anthony Cheke has revealed that a previously ignored or misinterpreted report from the 1830s of Mascarene Grey White-eye *Zosterops borbonicus* being introduced from Réunion to Île Sainte-Marie off north-east Madagascar is valid. Cheke cites evidence from the original paper (published in 1840) and the discovery of a specimen from Madagascar collected by Victor Sganzin in 1831 and held in the Paris museum. There is evidence that the species was also introduced to Nosy Be (off north-west Madagascar) in the mid-19th century, but it no longer survives at either locality.

Source: *Bull. Br. Ornithol. Cl.* 129, pp. 104–108

#### Status of the Sakalava Rail

The Sakalava Rail *Amaurornis olivieri* is confined to a few wetlands in western Madagascar. Between August 2003 and November 2006, 36 potential sites were surveyed by Marc Rabenandrasana *et al.*, with the result that birds were found at just five of these, with between 12 and 39 birds at each, giving an estimated total maximum population of 215 birds. Their favoured habitat is lotic marshes with large areas of open water, reeds and floating *Salvinia*. Wetland loss as a result of conversion to rice fields and fires, along with human disturbance (fishing and hunting), are thought to be the main threats, although hydrology change and exotic fish and vegetation have not yet been studied in any detail.

Source: *Bird Conserv. Intern.* 19, pp. 23–32

#### Future of Tristan Albatross looks bleak

The conservation status of Tristan Albatross *Diomedea (exulans) dabbenena* was recently upgraded to Critically Endangered, as it is severely threatened both at sea, by

the long-line fishing industry, and at its only significant breeding site, Gough Island, by mouse predation on chicks. The latter problem is apparently worsening, with chick production hitting an all-time low in 2008. In the north of the island, where more than 25% of all pairs breed, barely 1% of chicks survived.

Source: *Africa—Birds & Birding* 14(3), p. 12

## Southern Africa

### Marion's Common Moorhen

On 19 October 2008, Petrus Kritzinger photographed a Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* along a rocky beach on the north side of Marion Island in the southern Indian Ocean. This appears to be not only the first record of the species for the island and on any of the subantarctic islands in this region of the Southern Ocean, but from anywhere in the subantarctic region (cf. Shirihai, H. 2007. *A Complete Guide to Antarctic Wildlife*, second edn. A. & C. Black).

Source: *Promerops* 277, pp. 8–9

### Successful Lesser Flamingos under threat

The controversial R1.6 billion building development next to Kamfers Dam in Kimberley, South Africa, has been given the go-ahead by the Northern Cape Department of Tourism, Environment and Conservation in April 2009, despite objections from several organisations, including the Save the Flamingo Association, BirdLife South Africa and the Northern Cape Wildlife Association. Kamfers Dam harbours the largest population of Lesser Flamingos *Phoeniconaias minor* in southern Africa and is one of only six breeding sites globally. An estimated 9,000 chicks hatched in 2007/08 and this year breeding success was expected to be even higher (see *Bull. ABC* 16: 20–21). The building development is expected to have a severe negative impact on the flamingos. Kamfers Dam is already suffering as a result of untreated

sewage from a broken sewage works flowing into it.

Source: [www.savetheflamingo.co.za](http://www.savetheflamingo.co.za)  
May 2009

### Oldest Tristan Albatross found dead

A Tristan Albatross *Diomedea (exulans) dabbenena* was found dead on the beach near Gouritzmond, Western Cape, South Africa, on 7 April 2009. The bird, a male, had been ringed in February 1976 at a small colony on Gough Island when he was already at least five years old, because Tristan Albatrosses only return to their colonies at this age. He was thus at least 38 years old when he died, making him the oldest Tristan Albatross on record.

Source: *Africa—Birds & Birding* 14(3), p. 12

### Breeding success for Greater Crested Tern in South Africa

Following the eradication of most of the feral cats on Robben Island, off Cape Town, an estimated 8,500 pairs of Greater Crested (Swift) Terns *Sterna bergii*—the entire South African breeding population—congregated at this World Heritage Site to breed successfully in 2009. The cat-eradication plan was initiated in 2005 and virtually all of the cats have since been culled. In 2006, most of the African Black Oystercatcher *Haematopus moquini* nests on the island were lost to cats, who also preyed on several tern species, Jackass Penguins *Spheniscus demersus* and lizards. The few remaining cats still constitute a threat and ways to remove them completely are being examined.

Source: *Africa—Birds & Birding* 14(3), p. 13

### Internet resources

#### AFRING online

The African Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) and the Animal Demography Unit (ADU) have announced that the

AFRING (African Bird Ringing Scheme) website is now live ([www.afring.org](http://www.afring.org)). The site's principle aims are to provide information and links to bird ringers in Africa (and around the world) relating to African bird ringing initiatives, access to ringing data and providing online mechanisms for reporting recovered rings or re-sightings of colour rings, all of which will contribute to establishing regional cooperation and encourage use of scientific data for bird and wetland conservation. The site will continually be updated and further developments are already in the pipeline to provide more information and resources.

Source: Doug Harebottle in litt. to *African Birding* June 2009

### New website on Northern Bald Ibis

Launched on 2 February 2009, the website of the International Advisory Working Group of the Northern Bald Ibis *Geronticus eremita* (IAGNBI) provides information on different topics dealing with the biology and the conservation of this threatened species. It also includes several pages on ongoing research projects and information on captive populations. The IAGNBI website can be found at: [www.iagnbi.org](http://www.iagnbi.org)

Source: [http://www.unep-aewa.org/news/latest\\_news.htm](http://www.unep-aewa.org/news/latest_news.htm)

### Canary Islands birds

Two useful blogs for local and foreign birders interested in the avifauna of the Canary Islands are: 'Aves en Canarias', <http://avesencanarias.blogspot.com/> and 'Aves en Lanzarote,' <http://www.birdinglanzarote.blogspot.com/>

Source: Rubén Barone Tosco in litt.  
April 2009

### Denis Island blog

The following blog from Denis Island, Seychelles, created by John Nevill of Green Islands Foundation, a local NGO, gives the latest news on birds and other wildlife of the island: <http://denisisland.blogspot.com/>

Source: Adrian Skerrett in litt.  
November 2008

# Vocalisations of Angolan birds: new descriptions and other notes

Michael S. L. Mills

**Nouvelles descriptions et notes concernant les émissions vocales d'oiseaux angolais.** Les émissions vocales des oiseaux angolais sont mal connues, mais constituent une aide importante pour inventorier les espèces, dont plusieurs sont menacées. L'auteur fournit des informations inédites concernant les vocalisations d'oiseaux angolais basées sur des enregistrements faits à l'occasion de trois visites en Angola. Des exemples de la plupart des vocalisations analysées se trouvent sur un CD produit par l'auteur (Mills 2007) qui devrait être consulté en conjonction avec cet article. De nouvelles informations sont présentées pour plusieurs espèces endémiques, rares et menacées, dont le Francolin à bandes grises *Francolinus (Pternistis) griseostriatus*, le Francolin de Swierstra *F. (P.) swierstrai*, le Coliou à dos marron *Colius castanotus*, le Bulbul à ventre roux *Phyllastrephus fulviventer*, le Rougegorge de Gabela *Sheppardia gabela*, le Cossyphe des grottes *Xenocopsychus ansorgei*, le Cossyphe à tête blanche *Cossypha heinrichi*, la Cisticole murmur *Cisticola bulliens*, le Gobemouche de l'Angola *Melaenornis (Dioptrornis) brunneus*, le Souimanga d'Oustalet *Cinnyris oustaleti*, le Souimanga de l'Angola *C. ludovicensis*, le Souimanga de Bannerman *Cyanomitra bannermani*, le Gladiateur de Monteiro *Malacorhinus monteiri*, le Bagadais de Gabela *Prionops gabela* et l'Amarante de Landana *Lagonosticta landanae*. Les seules espèces angolaises pour lesquelles il n'y a pas encore d'enregistrements publiés disponibles sont le Gonolek de Braun *Laniarius brauni*, la Cisticole à queue noire *Cisticola melanurus* et le Souimanga de Bocage *Nectarinia bocagei*; certains cris de la cisticole et du souimanga ont toutefois été décrits.

**Summary.** Vocalisations of Angolan birds are poorly known, but are an important aid in species-specific surveys. I provide new information on the vocalisations of Angolan birds based on recordings made during three separate trips to Angola. Examples of most vocalisations discussed can be found on Mills (2007), which should be consulted in conjunction with this paper. New information is presented for several endemic, rare and threatened species, including Grey-striped Francolin (or Spurfowl) *Francolinus (Pternistis) griseostriatus*, Swierstra's Francolin *F. (P.) swierstrai*, Red-backed Mousebird *Colius castanotus*, Pale Olive Greenbul *Phyllastrephus fulviventer*, Gabela Akalat *Sheppardia gabela*, Angola Cave Chat *Xenocopsychus ansorgei*, White-headed Robin Chat *Cossypha heinrichi*, Bubbling Cisticola *Cisticola bulliens*, Angola Slaty Flycatcher *Melaenornis (Dioptrornis) brunneus*, Oustalet's Sunbird *Cinnyris oustaleti*, Ludwig's Double-collared Sunbird *C. ludovicensis*, Bannerman's Sunbird *Cyanomitra bannermani*, Monteiro's Bushshrike *Malacorhinus monteiri*, Gabela Helmetshrike *Prionops gabela* and Pale-billed Firefinch *Lagonosticta landanae*. Braun's Bushshrike *Laniarius brauni*, Black-tailed Cisticola *Cisticola melanurus* and Bocage's Sunbird *Nectarinia bocagei* are the only three Angolan birds for which no published recordings are available, although some calls of the cisticola and sunbird have been described.

Angola has a diverse, yet poorly known avifauna (Dean 2000). The vocalisations of several species are entirely unknown (Chappuis 2000) and the full repertoire of many others not yet described. Knowledge of bird vocalisations is an important aid in avifaunal surveys, particularly in dense habitats where detection relies heavily on aural signals (Lor & Malecki 2002). Recordings for use in playback of bird song may

increase rate and reliability of detection (Boscolo *et al.* 2006), although playback may have some undesirable side-affects (Conway & Gibbs 2005). Vocalisations also hold characters that can be used in the study of the evolutionary history of birds (McCracken & Sheldon 1997), and there are several unresolved taxonomic issues among Angola's avifauna (Mills & Dean 2007) that knowledge of vocalisations may prove useful for resolving.

**Table 1.** Gazetteer of localities mentioned in the text. Further details for some localities can be found in Dean (2001) and Ryan *et al.* (2004).

**Tableau 1.** Localités citées dans le texte. Pour des détails supplémentaires concernant certaines localités, voir Dean (2001) et Ryan *et al.* (2004).

Location	Province	Coordinates
40 km north of Calandula	Malanje	08°54'S 16°05'E
Bango	Cuanza Sul	11°21'S 14°13'E
Bimbe	Cuanza Sul	11°06'S 14°13'E
Cassongue	Cuanza Sul	11°51'S 15°03'E
Gabela	Cuanza Sul	10°51'S 14°22'E
Gungo	Cuanza Sul	11°49'S 14°08'E
Katunda	Cuanza Sul	11°44'S 14°28'E
Kissama National Park	Cuanza Sul	09°30'S 13°45'E
Kumbira Forest	Cuanza Sul	11°08'S 14°17'E
Longa River	Bengo/Cuanza Sul	10°12'S 13°31'E
Mount Moco IBA	Huambo	12°26'S 15°09'E

The aim of this paper is present new information on vocalisations of Angolan birds, based on recordings made during three separate visits to the country: in October 2003, August–October 2005 and August 2006. Most of these recordings are presented on Mills (2007), which compendium should be consulted in conjunction with the following, since regular reference is made to sounds on this volume, including to specific sections of a vocalisation (e.g. 'part A') for which details are presented in the accompanying guide. Original recordings will be housed with the Wildlife Section of The British Library Sound Archive (BLSA). Digital sound-recordings were made using a Sony minidisc recorder (MZ-RH910; PCM recording format) and Sennheiser unidirectional microphone (MKE300). These sounds were copied digitally to a computer for inspection and editing using Goldwave ([www.goldwave.com](http://www.goldwave.com)) and production of sonograms using Raven Lite (Cornell Lab of Ornithology 2003). Vocalisations were compared, aurally and using sonograms, to recordings of closely related taxa presented on Chappuis (2000) and Gibbon (1995), and cross-referenced to descriptions of vocalisations given in the *Birds of Africa* series, Zimmerman *et al.* (1996), Borrow & Demey (2001), Stevenson & Fanshawe (2002) and Hockey *et al.* (2005). Comparisons were generally made with small sample sizes, incomplete knowledge of repertoires and lack of knowledge of analogous

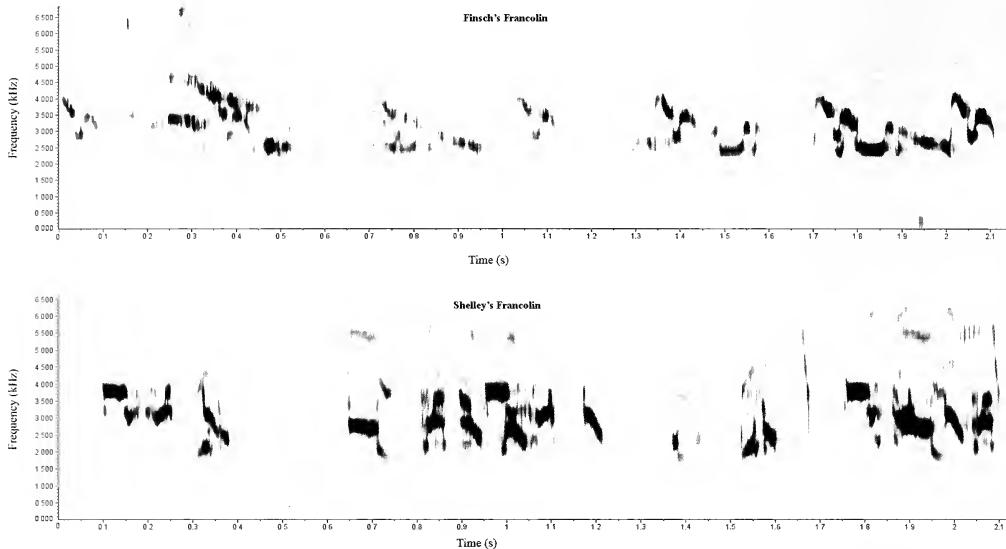
vocalisations from related taxa; this should be kept in mind when interpreting differences presented.

Below I list information for 47 species, either in the form of a first description, additions to known descriptions, or other notes, following the taxonomic order of Dean (2000). Species names are followed in square parentheses by the relevant track number on Mills (2007), and the date and locality of recording (see Table 1 for locality information). Of greatest significance are first descriptions for Swierstra's Francolin (or Spurfowl) *Francolinus (Pternistis) swierstrai* (Vulnerable), Gabela Akalat *Sheppardia gabela* (Endangered), Angola Slaty Flycatcher *Dioptrornis brunneus* and Gabela Helmetshrike *Prionops gabela* (Endangered). Elsewhere I described the first vocalisations for Brazza's Martin *Phedina brazzae* (Mills & Cohen 2007), also recorded in Angola. The only Angolan species remaining for which no published recordings are available are Braun's Bushshrike *Laniarius brauni* (see Sinclair *et al.* 2007 for some information), Black-tailed Cisticola *Cisticola melanurus* and Bocage's Sunbird *Nectarinia bocagei*, although some calls of the cisticola and sunbird were described by Irwin (1991) and Lippens & Wille (1976), respectively.

## Notes on species

### Finsch's Francolin *Francolinus (Scleroptila) finschi* [03; Mount Moco IBA, August 2005]

The only previous recordings are from south-east Gabon. The advertisement call is described as a duet (Chappuis 2000), a loud *wit-u-wit* heard at dusk (Urban *et al.* 1986). While at Mount Moco IBA, advertisement calls (part A on Mills 2007) were heard on each of three evenings, at dusk, and mornings, during the early and mid morning. Sexes called simultaneously: one, presumably the female, utters a repetitive *chi* or *wit*, 3–4 times per second, whereas the male sings a more complex *ti-du-towi*, reminiscent of other taxa of the subgenus *Scleroptila* (Madge & McGowan 2002), and perhaps most similar to that of Shelley's Francolin *F. shelleyi* (Fig. 1). The calls of the sexes appear not to be co-ordinated in any way; either bird can call alone at the start and end of a calling bout, and



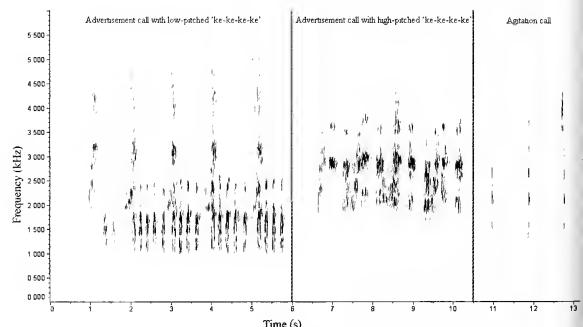
**Figure 1.** Sonograms of the territorial calls of Finsch's Francolin *Francolinus (Scleroptila) finschi*, alongside that of Shelley's Francolin *F. (S.) shelleyi* (Gibbon 1995), to illustrate similarities in structure.

Sonogrammes du cri territorial du Francolin de Finsch *Francolinus (Scleroptila) finschi*, avec celui du Francolin de Shelley *F. (S.) shelleyi* (Gibbon 1995), pour illustrer les similarités de leur structure.

from inspection of sonograms the calls appear not to be antiphonal. One group/pair calling would often stimulate others to call; at least three groups were heard each evening. A second call was recorded in response to playback and is presumed to be an agitation call (part B). One bird, probably the female, called a sharp, high-pitched *chwi* every c.1 second.

#### Grey-striped Francolin (Spurfowl) *Francolinus (Pternistis) griseostriatus* [04; Kumbira and Gungo, August–October 2005]

Reported to make a high-pitched rasping *kerak* similar to that of Scaly Francolin *F. (P.) squamatus* (Urban *et al.* 1986). Vaz Pinto (2002) suspected that this is an alarm-call, frequently made when flushed. He describes the territorial call as ‘a very loud and crescendo blow *fffff* repeated two or three times’. The advertisement call is a duet, with one bird calling a raspy upward-inflected *shwiii* followed closely by a raucous *ke-ke-ke-ke* of the second bird (parts A–C) either at 1.0–2.5 kHz or 2.0–3.0 kHz (Fig. 2). The agitation call is a loud, sharp *ke* repeated at intervals of c.1 second (part D; Fig. 2). A general trend, although unquantified, was noticed for birds in areas with high human population, such as Kumbira Forest (Ryan *et al.* 2004), to call only after dusk and before dawn. In other areas with fewer people, such as Kissama National Park



**Figure 2.** Sonograms of two different advertisement calls and the agitation call of Grey-striped Francolin *Francolinus (Pternistis) griseostriatus*.

Sonogrammes de deux cris d'avertissement différents et du cri d'agitation du Francolin à bandes grises *Francolinus (Pternistis) griseostriatus*.

and on the escarpment below Gungo, birds were heard calling well into the morning.

#### Swierstra's Francolin (Spurfowl) *Francolinus (Pternistis) swierstrai* [05; Mount Moco IBA, August 2005]

The only information on vocalisations for this species comes from Hall (1960), who described the call as ‘a shrill, harsh cry, not unlike that of *Francolinus jacksoni*’. This description refers specifically to the noise made by a bird after

being flushed, and is not the advertisement call as reported in Johnsgard (1988) or Madge & McGowan (2002). The agitation call is continuous fowl-like clucking, whereas the advertisement call is a loud crowing sequence that initially grows in loudness and then fades again towards the end. Sonograms were too unclear to visualise usefully. The recording on Mills (2007) has been amplified and an echo added to prevent playback of calls, and consequently sounds reminiscent of Crested Guineafowl *Guttera pucherani*. Researchers wishing to study this species should contact the author if they wish to have an unedited recording.

#### **Red-crested Turaco *Tauraco erythrolophus* [07; Kumbira, August 2005]**

The only published recordings are from birds in captivity (Chappuis 2000) and the only vocal description, not mentioned by Fry *et al.* (1988), is by Heinrich (1958). He described the call as a very loud *krruokrruokrruokrruokrruo* and the warning call as a rough, rather loud *örrr. . . . örrr.* Calls of wild birds (Mills 2007) match exactly the calls presented on Chappuis (2000), an introductory note followed after a short pause by a series of slow, raspy notes. These are most similar to the calls of the closely related Bannerman's Turaco *T. bannermani*, although the latter's are delivered at a more rapid tempo. Other vocalisations include a single *kkkrrr* (possibly the warning call referred to by Heinrich 1958) and an excited *ke-ke-ke* (beginning of part C).

#### **Mountain Nightjar *Caprimulgus poliocephalus***

[not recorded; Katunda, October 2003]

The endemic subspecies *koesteri* was heard but not recorded. The song sounded typical of the *C. poliocephalus / ruwenzorii* group.

#### **Swift species *Apus* sp. [14–16; Kumbira, September 2005 and August 2006]**

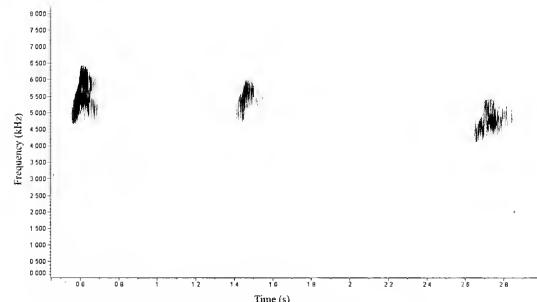
Three different vocalisations from large dark swifts are presented on Mills (2007), all recorded at Kumbira Forest. A recent visit in November 2008 to Kumbira revealed that all three calls are made by the same swifts, which were nesting in the cliffs on Mt Njelo. Those on track 14 sound similar to the calls of African Black Swift *Apus barbatus*. Calls on track 15 are excited calls made by a pair of birds in a flock, chasing each other. However, calls on track 16 are rather like those

made by Little Swift *A. affinis* and were made by a flock of swifts (certainly not Little Swift) circling above the forest in the late evening. These distinctive calls suggest that this is an undescribed species of swift.

#### **Fernando Po Swift *Apus (barbatus) sladeniae***

[17; Mount Moco IBA, August 2005]

The only two specimens from the Angolan highlands of the *A. barbatus* complex, females collected at Mt Moco, were identified as *sladeniae* (Brooke 1970). Because no other taxa from this region, the small flock of very dark birds (no pale throat seen) observed at Mount Moco IBA in the early morning, were tentatively ascribed to Fernando Po Swift (Mills & Dean 2007). Birds made a short, high-pitched scream at 4.5–6.5 kHz (Fig. 3).



**Figure 3.** Sonogram of the short, high-pitched scream of Fernando Po Swift *Apus (barbatus) sladeniae*.

Sonogramme du cri court et aigu du Martinet de Fernando Po *Apus (barbatus) sladeniae*.

#### **Red-backed Mousebird *Colius castanotus***

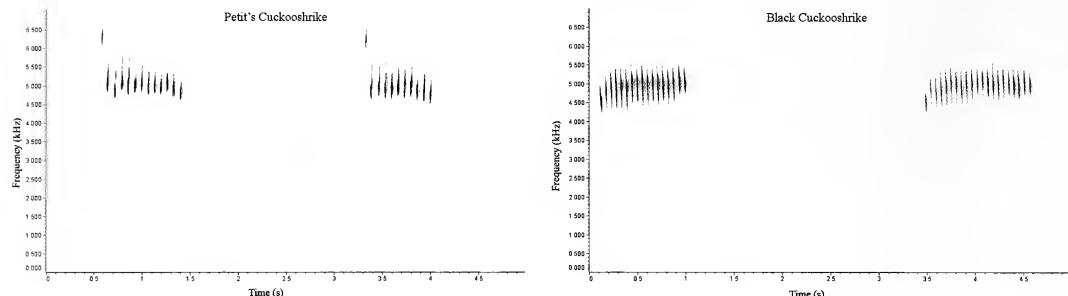
[18; Longa River, October 2003, and Gungo, October 2005]

The voice of this species was previously unknown (Fry *et al.* 1988) and unrecorded (Chappuis 2000). Flocks of foraging birds make a weak, high-pitched twittering, almost continuously (part A). Other calls include a harsh *chee chee chee* (part C), virtually indistinguishable from the call of Speckled Mousebird *C. striatus* (Gibbon 1995, Hockey *et al.* 2005).

#### **Western Green Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus coryphaeus***

[22; Mount Moco IBA, August 2005]

Calls of the subspecies *angolensis* fall within the range of vocalisations made by the nominate subspecies presented on Chappuis (2000).



**Figure 4.** Sonograms of the songs of Petit's Cuckooshrike *Campephaga petiti* and Black Cuckooshrike *C. flava* (Gibbon 1995), for comparison.

Sonogrammes du chant de l'Échenilleur de Petit *Campephaga petiti* et, pour comparaison, de celui de l'Échenilleur à épaulettes jaunes *C. flava*.

#### Petit's Cuckooshrike *Campephaga petiti* [38; Gungo, October 2005]

No description of the vocalisations was given in Keith *et al.* (1992), although according to the authors it had been tape-recorded by R. McVicker. Stevenson & Fanshawe (2002) describe the song as 'a strong, rhythmical whistled series sisisi-seeuu the first notes identical, the last note falling in tone', and Zimmerman *et al.* (1996) as 'a high-pitched, scratchy warbling'. Recordings made in Angola are similar to, but distinguishable from, the song of Black Cuckooshrike *C. flava*; identification was confirmed by the presence of the distinctive female with yellow underparts. The song is a weak, high-pitched trill, consisting of an introductory note in the 6.0–6.5 kHz range followed by c.10 notes, with a slightly wavering quality, in the 4.5–6.0 kHz range and dropping slightly in pitch towards the end of the sequence (Fig. 4). Black Cuckooshrike songs (recording from Gibbon 1995) lack the introductory note, comprise more notes, delivered more rapidly and not dropping in pitch through

the sequence, giving the song a stronger, more even quality (Fig. 4).

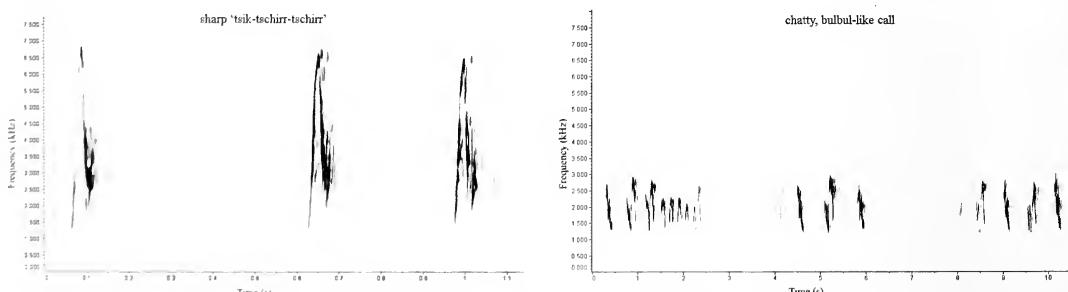
#### Pale Olive Greenbul *Phyllastrephus fulviventeris*

[45; Kumbira, August–September 2005]

The only recorded vocalisation from western Congo-Kinshasa (Chappuis 2000) is a nasal whining, and is probably a contact-call (parts B–C). The most distinctive call, described as an alarm, is a loud, sharp tsik-tschorr-tschorr (Heinrich 1958) in the 1.5–7.0 kHz range (Fig. 5), which is most useful for finding the species. Other vocalisations include a chattier, bulbul-like song in the 1.2–3.0 kHz range (Fig. 5; part D).

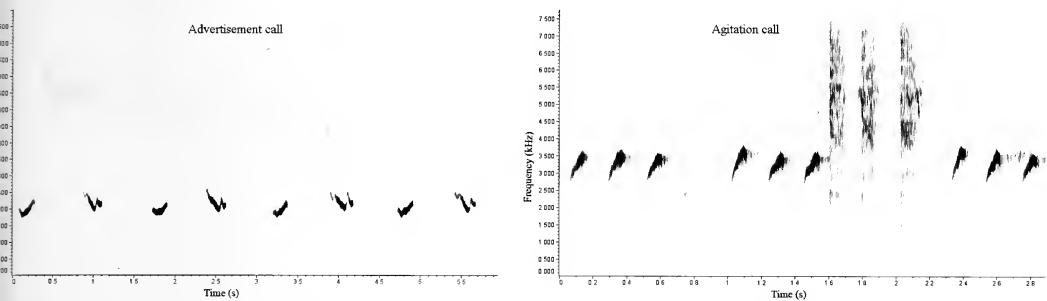
#### Gabela Akalat *Sheppardia gabela* [47; Kumbira and near Gabela, September 2005]

The vocalisations of this Endangered endemic are unknown except for a putative song described by Ryan *et al.* (2004). This recording was inspected aurally and differs from any of the three vocalisations presented on Mills (2007); it almost



**Figure 5.** Sonograms of two different vocalisations of Pale Olive Greenbul *Phyllastrephus fulviventeris*.

Sonogrammes de deux émissions vocales différentes du Bulbul à ventre roux *Phyllastrephus fulviventeris*.

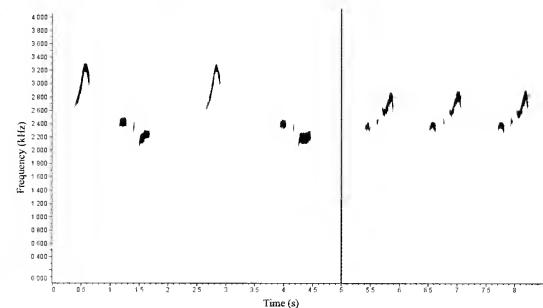


**Figure 6.** Sonograms of the advertisement and agitation calls of Gabela Akalat *Sheppardia gabela*.

Sonogrammes des cris d'avertissement et d'agitation du Rougegorge de Gabela *Sheppardia gabela*.

certainly belongs to Brown-chested Alethe *Alethe poliocephala*. The most common song, presumed to be the advertisement song, is made primarily from early to mid morning and during the last hour before sunset. It is a soft, regular series of two low-pitched whistles (1.7–2.7 kHz; part A), for which the rate of delivery can be varied. The one whistle has a simple upward inflection, the other is slightly more complicated, comprising two components (Fig. 6); this song may be repeated for a long period (sometimes >30 minutes). The two remaining vocalisations are presumed to be alarm/agitation calls and are often uttered in an alternating sequence (part B). According to Keith *et al.* (1992) Gabela Akalat forms a superspecies with Lowland Akalat *S. cyornithopsis*, Equatorial Akalat *S. aequatorialis*, Sharpe's Akalat *S. sharpei*, Bocage's Akalat *S. bocagei* and East Coast Akalat *S. gunningi*, although its exact position within this clade is undetermined. The whistles are most similar to those of the Lowland / Equatorial group (see sonograms in Dowsett-Lemaire 1997), although the agitation calls are similar to those recorded for Sharpe's Akalat in north-east Zambia, the only species for which comparable vocalisations were available (recordings of Sharpe's Akalat available from the author). A piercing, high-pitched call is repeated, interspersed with harsh 'tche-tche-tche' calls (Fig. 6). Almost all those birds found during my visits (>50) were first located by call, making knowledge of vocalisations important for any future surveys.

**Angola Cave Chat** *Xenocopsychus ansorgei* [48; Mount Moco IBA and Kumbira, August 2005] The first recordings were made in October 2003 (part D) and are described in Ryan *et al.* (2004). However, this song is not the commonest vocalisa-

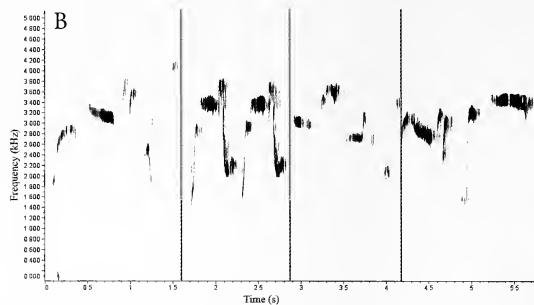
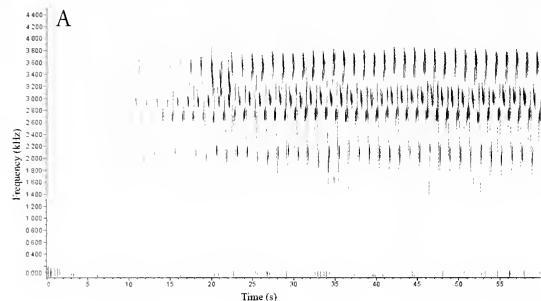


**Figure 7.** Sonograms of two variations of the most frequently heard call of Angola Cave Chat *Xenocopsychus ansorgei*.

Sonogrammes de deux variations du cri le plus fréquent du Cossyphé des grottes *Xenocopsychus ansorgei*.

tion and appears to be the male's territorial song. The most frequently heard vocalisation (parts A and C) is a simple series of three clear whistles, the first slower, higher pitched and with an upward inflection, followed by a pause of variable length and then two shorter, lower-pitched notes with a downward inflection (Fig. 7), not unlike some vocalisations of White-browed Robin Chat *Cossypha heuglini*. This song may be reversed as two short, similar-pitched notes followed by a more drawn-out, upward-inflected note (part B; Fig. 7). Some of these vocalisations were described by Heinrich (1958).

**Brown-chested Alethe** *Alethe poliocephala* [49; Kumbira and near Gabela, September 2005] Songs of the endemic subspecies *hallae* differ from the descending vocalisations presented at the beginning of Chappuis (2000), which may represent a very rare call of Brown-chested Alethe, but are very similar to the simple whistles that follow.



**Figure 8.** Sonograms of vocalisations of White-headed Robin Chat *Cossypha heinrichi*. (A) An entire song bout to illustrate the increase in intensity through the sequence. (B) Four variations of the song phrase repeated during a song bout. The second song phrase illustrated shows two rapid repeats of the same phrase.

Sonogrammes d'émissions vocales du Cossyphe à tête blanche *Cossypha heinrichi*. (A) Une séquence entière de chant pour illustrer l'augmentation en intensité pendant la séquence. (B) Quatre variations de la phrase répétée pendant une séquence de chant. La seconde phrase contient deux répétitions rapides de la même phrase.

**White-headed Robin Chat** *Cossypha heinrichi* [51; 40 km north of Calandula, August 2006] The only description of the species' vocalisation is that it resembles 'White-browed Robin Chat *C. heuglini* in structure, but is much higher pitched and faster' (Sinclair *et al.* 2007). White-headed Robin Chat sings in bouts of c.35–70 seconds ( $n=4$  song bouts) during which a song phrase, consisting of several clear, musical whistles, is repeated continuously, barely audible initially but growing greatly in intensity through the sequence (Fig. 8a). The complexity and duration, but not the pitch, of the song phrase can vary between bouts (Fig. 8b) but appears not to change within a bout, and is delivered at a mean rate of 0.6–1.7 phrases per second ( $n=4$  song bouts). The pitch of all song phrases recorded was in the 1.5–4.0 kHz range; inspection of sonograms of White-browed Robin Chat produced from Gibbon (1995) show almost complete overlap in frequency (1.2–4.0 kHz) with White-headed Robin Chat. The song of White-browed Robin Chat differs primarily in that a great variety of phrases are sung in any one bout, whereas White-headed Robin Chat repeats the same phrase. Another vocalisation recorded was a single, high-pitched (3.6–3.8 kHz), upward-inflected whistle repeated about every two seconds.

**Forest Scrub Robin** *Cercotrichas leucosticta* [52; Kumbira, October 2005]

The song of the endemic subspecies *reichenowi* is a sweet, very musical melody of notes, as is typical for the species, but differs from recordings of the

*leucosticta* or *colstoni* subspecies from Côte d'Ivoire (Chappuis 2000) in several ways: in comparison to Côte d'Ivoire birds, Angolan birds sing (i) at a lower frequency (2.0–3.5 kHz compared to 2.8–4.2 kHz), (ii) fewer notes per second and (iii) shorter sequences, both in duration and number of notes (Fig. 9). Although insufficient data are available to make statistical comparisons, >50 individuals were heard during visits to Angola and none sang as quickly as the Côte d'Ivoire bird.

**Evergreen Forest Warbler** *Bradypterus lopezi* [55; Mount Moco IBA, August 2005]

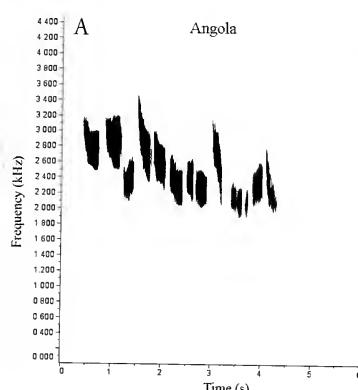
Songs of the endemic subspecies *boultoni* are a typical sequence of similar notes increasing in intensity through the sequence (Chappuis 2000). They do not audibly differ from vocalisations of other subspecies in West or East Africa.

**Red-faced Cisticola** *Cisticola erythrops* [no recording]

Although not presented on Mills (2007), recordings of the near-endemic subspecies *lepe* can be heard in the background of Ludwig's Double-collared Sunbird *Cinnyris ludovicensis* (track 90), and were regularly heard throughout visits to the Angolan highlands (the only records of this subspecies outside of Angola are from the Marungu Highlands, some 1,600 km away; Dowsett & Prigogine 1974). Heinrich (1958) described the song and a potential alarm-call, but did not compare these to other subspecies, whilst Sinclair *et al.* (2007) describe the call and song as 'very different from those of Red-faced Cisticola *C. e. erythrops*,



Côte d'Ivoire



Angola



B

**Figure 9.** Sonograms of Forest Scrub Robin *Cercotrichas leucosticta* song. (A) Examples from Côte d'Ivoire and Angola to illustrate the differences. (B) Songs of Angolan birds, showing a series of clear whistles that vary in pitch, mostly with downward inflections in frequency.

Sonogrammes du chant de l'Agrobate du Ghana *Cercotrichas leucosticta*.

(A) Exemples de Côte d'Ivoire et de l'Angola pour illustrer les différences. (B) Chants d'oiseaux angolais, contenant une série de sifflements clairs de hauteur variable, la plupart ayant une inflexion descendante en fréquence.

the song being more melodious and liquid'. In my experience the vocalisations are very similar if not indistinguishable from this taxon in Cameroon and Gabon, although perhaps more varied than those of the southern African subspecies *nyasa*.

**Bubbling Cisticola** *Cisticola belliens* [57; Longa River, October 2003, and Bimbe, August 2005] Although not previously recorded, the song of this species is described as 'fairly musical, rippling and bubbling, preceded by 3 short introductory notes' (Urban *et al.* 1997), and is supposedly distinctive. The repertoire recorded for Bubbling Cisticola (Mills 2007) is very similar to that of Chattering Cisticola *C. anonymus* from Gabon and Cameroon, and Rattling Cisticola *C. chiniana* from Kenya and Tanzania, and may not be distinguishable from either species, especially considering the variability they all display. The latter two species are known to respond to each other's songs (Chappuis 2000). Furthermore, morphology is very similar between this trio, suggesting that these three species may form a superspecies at least, rather than Bubbling Cisticola, Chattering Cisticola and Trilling Cisticola *C. woosnami* (Urban *et al.* 1997), the latter having a rather different song and morphology. Molecular techniques should be used to investigate relationships between these taxa.

#### Wailing Cisticola *Cisticola lais* [58; Mount Moco IBA and Kumbira, August 2005]

Wailing Cisticola has a varied vocabulary that differs geographically (Urban *et al.* 1997) and the endemic *namba* subspecies appears to be no exception, although vocalisations are not dissimilar to those from other regions. Three vocalisations were witnessed in Angola: (i) a typical, loud *peeee*, (ii) the song, commencing with an upward-inflected note and followed by one or more even-toned, lower-pitched notes, (iii) and a buzzy scold made immediately after the song.

#### Miombo Wren Warbler *Calamonastes undosus*

[67; Mount Moco IBA, August 2005]

Songs of the endemic subspecies *huilae* match those made by the morphologically similar subspecies *undosus* and *cinereus*, and not those of the morphologically different *stierlingi* group (Urban *et al.* 1997, Chappuis 2000), which may be regarded as a separate species (Gill *et al.* 2009).

#### Grey Apalis *Apalis cinerea* [63; Mount Moco IBA, August 2005]

Songs of the endemic subspecies *grandis* were described by Heinrich (1958) but not compared to other subspecies; the recordings on Mills (2007) do not audibly differ from recordings of subspecies from Kenya and Cameroon (Chappuis

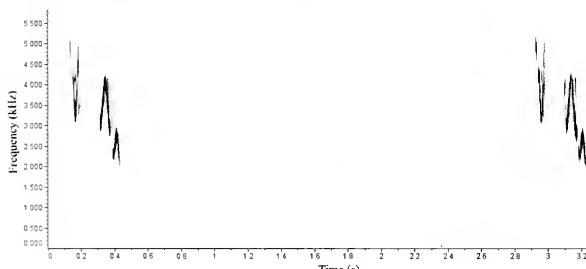
2000), although the sample presented does not include vocalisations from the female and may be insufficient to detect subtle differences.

#### Hartert's Camaroptera *Camaroptera brachyura harterti* [66; Kumbira and Bango, September–October 2005]

Vocalisations of this endemic taxon, sometimes treated as a full species (Gill *et al.* 2009), do not audibly differ from vocalisations made by other taxa in the *C. brachyura / brevicauda* complex.

#### Pulitzer's Longbill *Macrosphenus pulitzeri* [68]

The first description of vocalisations is by Ryan *et al.* (2004); no additional vocalisations were heard during three months of observation along the Angolan scarp, although the simplest song described as *chew-it* (Ryan *et al.* 2004) can be seen (but not heard) to comprise three, not two, discreet sounds with a general decrease in tone through the sequence (Fig. 10).



**Figure 10.** Sonogram of the *chew-it* call of Pulitzer's Longbill *Macrosphenus pulitzeri*, showing three separate notes, although only two can be heard.

Sonogramme du cri *tchou-it* du Nasique de Pulitzer *Macrosphenus pulitzeri*, contenant trois notes séparées, dont seulement deux sont audibles.

#### Long-billed Crombec *Sylvietta rufescens* [69;

Longa River, August 2006]

Vocalisations of the endemic subspecies *ansorgei* presented on Mills (2007) sound very similar to those of the race presented on Gibbon (1995). However, other vocalisations heard and recorded subsequent to the publication of Mills (2007) differ subtly from vocalisations in the south of the species' range. Its distinctness from southern subspecies should be investigated using molecular techniques, as the morphology is fairly distinct. It

has a white eyebrow, white underparts with rich rufous flanks, and a relatively short bill.

#### Southern Hyliota *Hyliota australis* [73; Kumbira, September 2005, and Bango, October 2005]

Some confusion exists over the identity of hyliotas along the Angolan escarpment (Mills & Dean 2007). Birds were highly vocal, usually being detected by an almost continuous dry chipping, especially in flight. These calls are presented on recordings by Bob Stjernstedt of Southern Hyliota from Zambia. The author had not previously heard Southern Hyliota give these calls, and hence declined to assign the calls on Mills (2007) to any given species. It appears there is little doubt that they are of Southern Hyliota (F. Dowsett-Lemaire *in litt.* 2008), although the habitat differs from that favoured in other parts of the range (Urban *et al.* 1997) and further investigation, especially using molecular techniques, would be of interest.

#### Angola Slaty Flycatcher *Melaenornis*

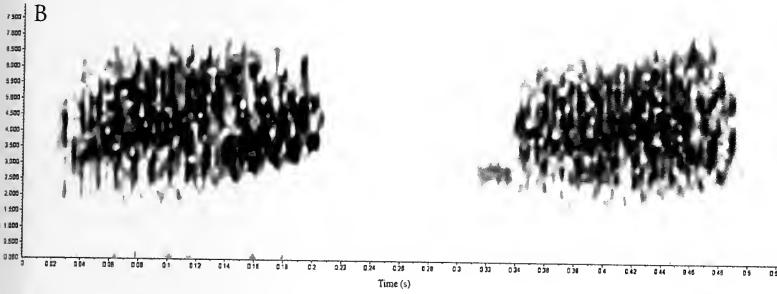
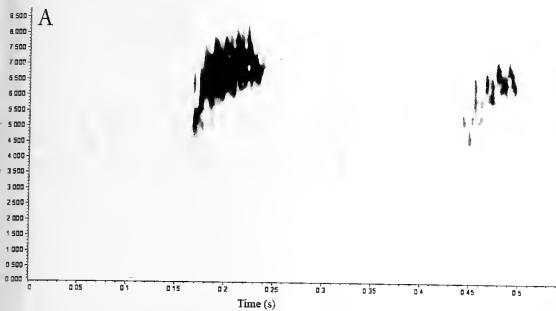
(*Dioptrornis brunneus*) [74; Kumbira, October 2003]

The voice of this endemic species was previously undescribed (Urban *et al.* 1997). Calls are a short, high-pitched (5.0–8.0 kHz) buzz, *zzzit-zit* repeated one to three times (Mills 2007; Fig. 11). No song or other vocalisations were heard. These calls are structurally similar to those of White-eyed Slaty Flycatcher *M. (D.) fischeri* presented on Chappuis (2000)—both, when listened to at a playback rate of 0.25 times the recording rate, can be heard to have an upward inflection—but differ in being higher pitched (dominant pitch 5.5 kHz in *fischeri* and 6.5 kHz in *brunneus*), less harsh and weaker, giving them distinctly different sounds. Vocal evidence suggests they should be treated as separate species, as is usually the case.

#### White-fronted Wattle-eye *Platysteira albifrons*

[78; Gungo and Bango, October 2005]

Calls first described by Ryan *et al.* (2004); no additional vocalisations were noted during three months of observations along the Angolan scarp, although not all vocalisations are presented on Mills (2007), including the four whistles most similar to Common Wattle-eye *P. cyanaea* for which a sonogram is presented by Ryan *et al.* (2004).



**Figure 11.** Sonograms of Slaty Flycatcher calls. (A) The high-pitched call of Angola Slaty Flycatcher *Melaenornis (Dioptrornis) brunneus* compared with that of (B) White-eyed Slaty Flycatcher *M. (D.) fischeri* (Chappuis 2000), to illustrate differences.

Sonogrammes de cris de gobemouches *Melaenornis*. (A) Le cri aigu du Gobemouche de l'Angola *Melaenornis (Dioptrornis) brunneus* comparé avec (B) celui du Gobemouche de Fischer *M. (D.) fischeri*, pour illustrer les différences.

#### Angola Batis *Batis minulla* [79; Kumbira, September 2005]

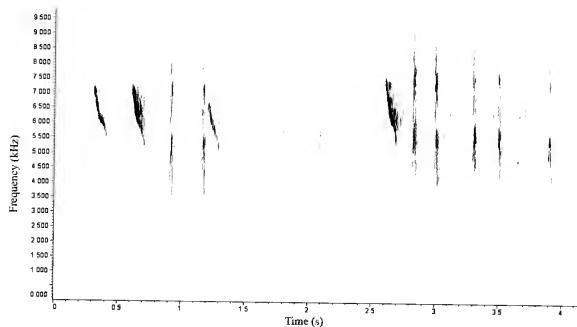
The first descriptions of vocalisations are provided by Dowsett-Lemaire (1997) and Chappuis (2000) based on recordings from Congo-Brazzaville: a series of 4–50 pure notes with a progressively descending tone. Recordings from Angola match these by descending in tone through the sequence and consistently lacking any buzzy notes made by some *Batis* species.

#### Brown Illadopsis *Illadopsis fulvescens* [80; Kumbira, September 2005]

Vocalisations of the endemic subspecies *dilutior* do not audibly differ from recordings presented on Chappuis (2000) made at various other Central African localities. Vocalisations include the characteristic *dict!-a-fown* phrase (Chapin 1953) made by birds from Central Africa but not West Africa (Fry *et al.* 2000).

#### Dusky Tit *Parus funereus* [82; Kumbira, September 2005, and Bango, October 2005]

Calls of the endemic subspecies *gabela* fall within the range typical for the species (Chappuis 2000). Mimicry recorded in Angola (Mills 2007) includes African Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone viridis*, Black-headed Oriole *Oriolus larvatus* and Dark-backed Weaver *Ploceus bicolor*.

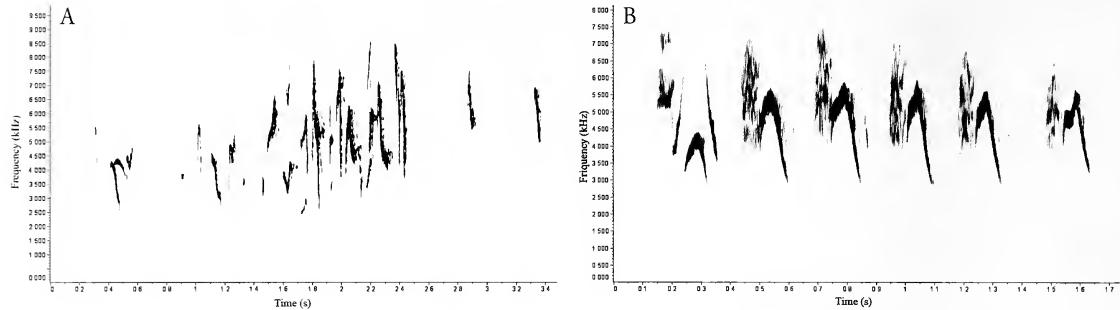


**Figure 12.** Sonogram illustrating two calls of Little Green Sunbird *Anthreptes seimundi*: spitted dry notes, with a smaller range in frequency, and a high-pitched call.

Sonogramme illustrant deux cris du Souimanga de Seimund *Anthreptes seimundi* : petites notes sèches, contenant peu de variation en fréquence, et un cri aigu.

#### Little Green Sunbird *Anthreptes seimundi* [86; Gungo, October 2005, and Bimbe, August 2006]

Fry *et al.* (2000) describe the song as a ‘very thin, high-pitched, insect-like *pssss* or *pssssup*’, which corresponds to the recording presented on Chappuis (2000), thought to be a call of two young individuals. Borrow & Demey (2001), too, describe only this call. However, these do not represent songs or calls of adults, and the first recordings of adult calls are presented on Mills (2007). Stevenson & Fanshawe (2002) describe the call as ‘a fairly loud, spitted, dry series of identical notes’, which may match one of the calls recorded in Angola (Mills 2007). The second



**Figure 13.** Sonograms of vocalisations of Oustalet's Sunbird *Cinnyris oustaleti*. (A) Jumbled song. (B) Harsher calls. Sonogrammes d'émissions vocales du Souimanga d'Oustalet *Cinnyris oustaleti*. (A) Chant désordonné. (B) Cris râpeux.

call is a very thin, high-pitched note, not nearly as drawn-out as the call presented on Chappuis (2000) (Fig. 12).

#### Bronzy Sunbird *Nectarinia kilimensis* [88;

Mount Moco IBA, August 2005]

Vocalisations of the endemic subspecies *gadowi* do not audibly fall outside the range of the characteristic 'loud, nasal' vocalisations typical of the species (Fry *et al.* 2000).

#### Oustalet's Sunbird *Cinnyris oustaleti* [89;

Kumbira, August 2005]

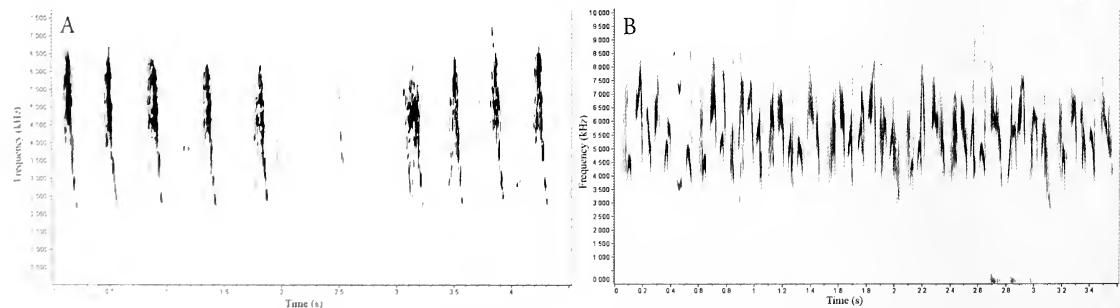
The only recordings are of the subspecies *rhodesiae*, with descriptions only of the soft *tzzip* foraging call and harder ticking (Fry *et al.* 2000). Several vocalisations of the nominate subspecies, endemic to Angola, are presented on Mills (2007): a rapidly jumbled song in the 2.5–8.5 kHz range and high-pitched *tzzip* notes in the 5.0–7.5 kHz range (Fig. 13a), harsher notes and *tchik tchik* flight-calls (end of track), the latter two similar to those of White-

bellied Sunbird *C. talatala*. The harsher notes consist of two different sounds: a buzz, followed immediately by a clear note that rises and then falls in pitch (Fig. 13b).

#### Ludwig's Double-collared Sunbird *Cinnyris ludovicensis* [90; Mount Moco IBA, August

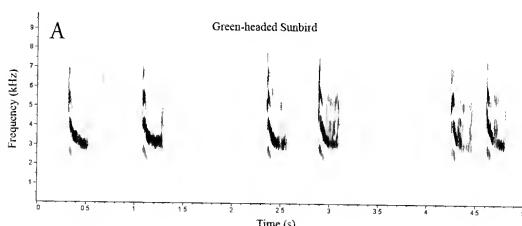
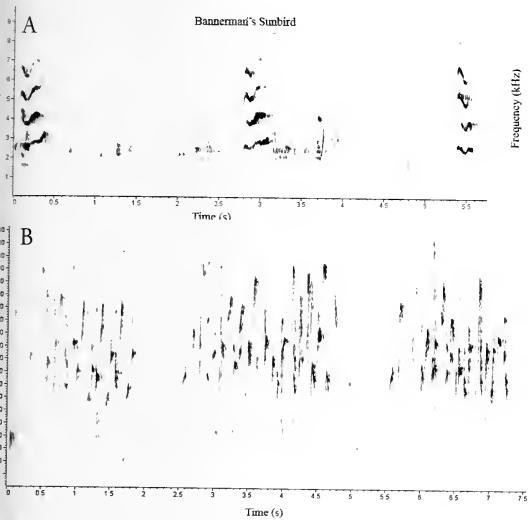
2005]

The taxonomy of the *africana* superspecies is poorly resolved (Fry *et al.* 2000), and all taxa may represent a single species (Dowsett & Forbes-Watson 1993). The only descriptions of vocalisations for this species, as treated by Fry *et al.* (2000), are of the subspecies *whytei* in Malawi (Dowsett-Lemaire 1988, Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 2006). Chappuis (2000) erroneously lists a bird recorded from Kakamega Forest in western Kenya as this species. The first recordings of calls and song of the subspecies *ludovicensis*, endemic to Angola, are presented on Mills (2007). Calls are a series of repeated harsh, nasal notes in the frequency range 2.5–6.5 kHz (Fig. 14a); the song is a very



**Figure 14.** Sonograms of vocalisations of Ludwig's Double-collared Sunbird *Cinnyris ludovicensis*. (A) Repeated harsh, nasal calls. (B) Rapid, jumbled song.

Sonogrammes d'émissions vocales du Souimanga de l'Angola *Cinnyris ludovicensis*. (A) Cris râpeux et nasillards répétés. (B) Chant rapide et désordonné.



**Figure 15.** Sonograms of vocalisations of Bannerman's Sunbird *Cyanomitra bannermani*. (A) Calls compared to those of Green-headed Sunbird *C. verticalis*. (B) Song, a rapid, undulating jumble of high-pitched notes.

Sonogrammes d'émissions vocales du Souimanga de Bannerman *Cyanomitra bannermani*. (A) Cris comparés à ceux du Souimanga à tête verte *C. verticalis*. (B) Chant : un gazouillis ondulé rapide de notes aiguës.

rapid, jumbled series of high-pitched notes in the 3.5–8.5 kHz range (Fig. 14b). These vocalisations are similar to those of other double-collared sunbirds and probably indistinguishable from those described for *whytei* in Malawi (Dowsett-Lemaire 1988) or for *graueri* in Rwanda (Dowsett-Lemaire 1990).

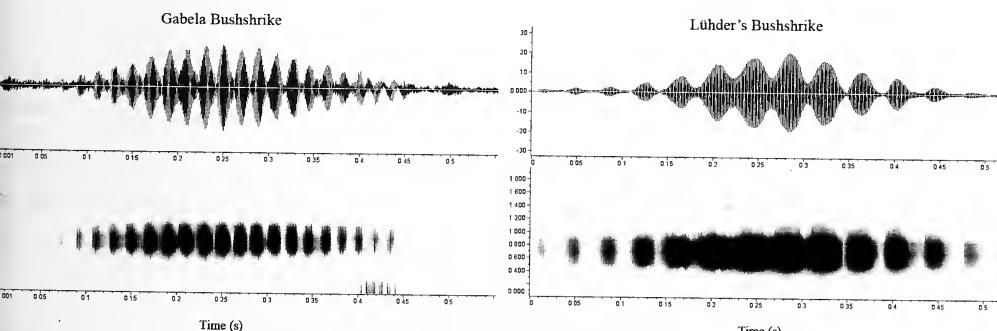
#### Bannerman's Sunbird *Cyanomitra bannermani*

[92; 40 km north of Calandula, August 2006]  
The only previous recordings are from north-west Zambia (Chappuis 2000); the call is a 'nasal, up-slurred *djoowi'* (Fry *et al.* 2000) from which recordings of Angolan birds do not audibly differ (Mills 2007). This call is tonally similar to that of Green-headed Sunbird *C. verticalis*, with which it forms a superspecies (Fry *et al.* 2000), although

inspection of recordings of *C. verticalis* from Chad (Chappuis 2000) suggests that the call made by Bannerman's Sunbird is more complex, with an additional upslurred ending (Fig. 15a). The first song recordings are presented on Mills (2007) and comprise a rapid, undulating jumble of high-pitched notes (3–9 kHz) (Fig. 15b), overall not dissimilar to the song of Green-headed Sunbird.

#### Gabela Bushshrike *Laniarius gabela* [94; Kumbira, August 2005]

The full repertoire was first described by Ryan *et al.* (2004); no additional vocalisations were heard during three months along the Angolan scarp. Three of the most typical vocalisations are presented on Mills (2007): a deep, guttural *worrrk*, a harsh *tsik ksh-ksh-ksh-kshk* and a boubou-like



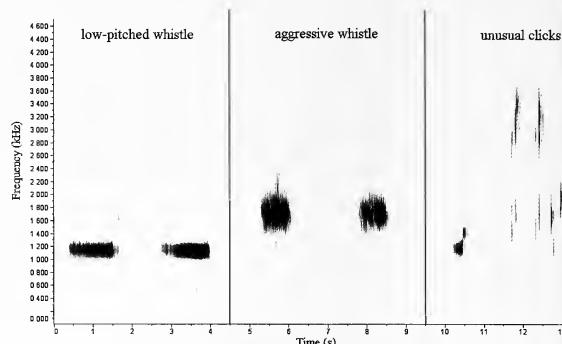
**Figure 16.** Waveforms (above) and sonograms comparing the *worrrk* call of Gabela Bushshrike *Laniarius gabela* and Lühdorfer's Bushshrike *L. luehderi*.

Formes des ondes (en haut) et sonogrammes comparant le cri *worrrk* du Gonolek de l'Angola *Laniarius gabela* avec celui du Gonolek de Lühdorfer *L. luehderi*.

*whoo whoo* (Ryan *et al.* 2004). Comparing the *worrk* call to the analogous vocalisation of Lühdorff's Bushshrike *L. luehderi* from Makokou, Gabon (Chappuis 2000), with which Gabela Bushshrike is often lumped (see Fry *et al.* 2000 for discussion), some differences can be detected. Vocalisations of Gabela Bushshrike are marginally higher pitched (0.5–1.2 kHz vs. 0.4–1.1 kHz) and comprise more components, visualised on a waveform as the number of oscillations (Fig. 16). However, the differences in pitch are so small as to be potentially meaningless, especially considering the range of frequencies any single bird can produce (see Dowsett-Lemaire 1990) and the variation of calls made by any *Laniarius* species. Proper comparisons of vocalisations should be made using recordings from several individuals and statistical analysis, in conjunction with playback of calls in the field to judge which differences are biologically meaningful.

#### Monteiro's Bushshrike *Malaconotus monteiri* [97; Kumbira, August–September 2005, and Gungo, October 2005]

The only described calls are from Cameroon: Andrews (1994) describes it as a mournful whistle repeated five, not three, times, whereas Williams (1998) shows that songs of presumed *M. monteiri* are indistinguishable from Green-breasted Bushshrike *M. gladiator*. However, identification of *M. monteiri* in Cameroon is controversial and the vocalisations should be considered undescribed (Chappuis 2000). Vocalisations of 14 different individuals were heard along the Angolan scarp during August–October 2005, and some of these were recorded and are presented on Mills (2007). The song is a mournful, low-pitched whistle (1.0–1.2 kHz) typical of and overlapping in frequency with all songs of Grey-headed Bushshrike *M. blanchoti* presented on Chappuis (2000), but slightly lower pitched than the songs of Green-breasted Bushshrike *M. gladiator* (1.1–1.4 kHz) presented on the same volume. However, these minute differences should be investigated properly, using recordings from multiple individuals of each taxon, before they can be regarded as diagnostic. Similarity of vocalisations between Green-breasted, Grey-headed and Monteiro's Bushshrikes suggests that vocalisations are not a useful tool for separating them, and argues for a proper investigation of genetic differences.



**Figure 17.** Sonograms of Monteiro's Bushshrike *Malaconotus monteiri* vocalisations.

Sonogrammes d'émissions vocales du Gladiateur de Monteiro *Malaconotus monteiri*.

In Angola, Monteiro's Bushshrike whistles were repeated 1–14 times before a pause, with 77% of 245 bouts noted consisting of 1–3 whistles; some whistles had a falsetto ending. Other calls included a harsher, more aggressive whistle in the 1.4–2.0 kHz range, a call made by both Grey-headed Bushshrike and Green-breasted Bushshrike, and some unusual clicks that I have never heard made by other *Malaconotus* species (Fig. 17; part D).

#### Gabela Helmetshrike *Prionops gabela* [100; Kissama National Park and Bimbe, September 2005]

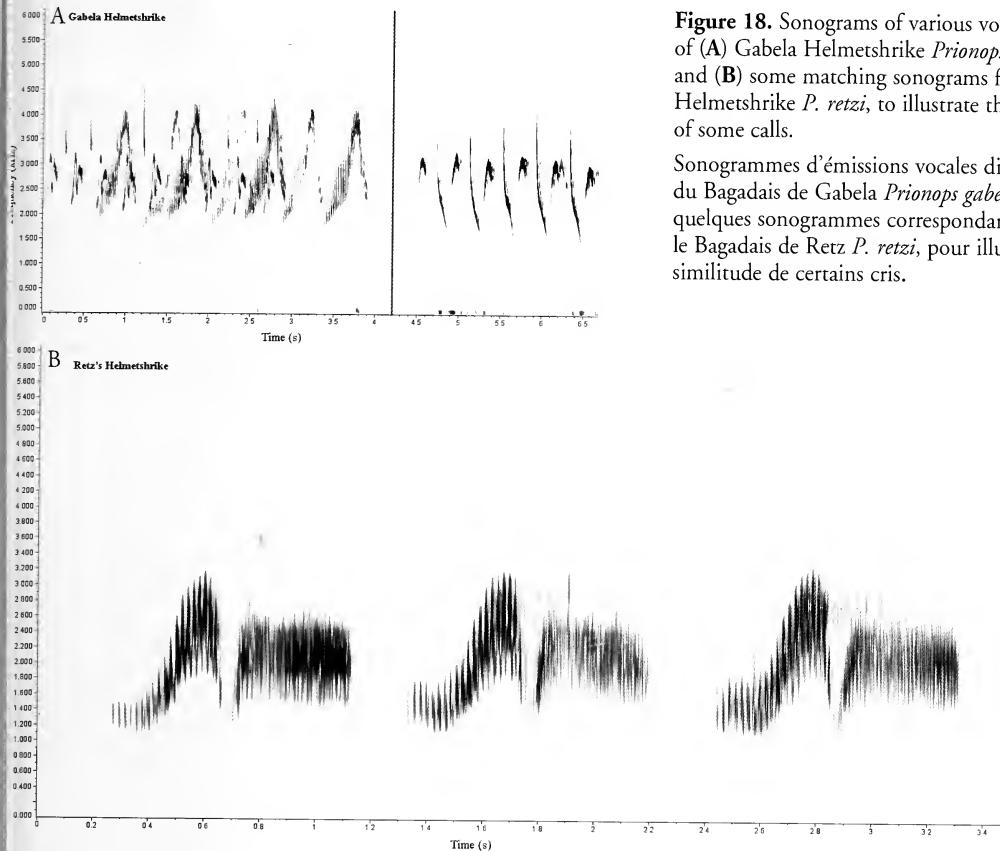
The vocalisations of this endemic were previously unknown (Fry *et al.* 2000). It has a broad vocal repertoire, with songs consisting of combinations of various clear whistles, clicks, buzzes and more grating sounds (Fig. 18), similar to the vocalisations made by Retz's Helmetshrike *P. retzi*. Juveniles made a continuous churring call (part F).

#### Bocage's Weaver *Ploceus temporalis* [103; Cassongue, August 2005]

The only known recordings are from north-western Zambia (Fry & Keith 2004; BLSA); recordings from Angola are of a male making the 'loud cha' call at a colony along a river (Fry & Keith 2004).

#### Dark-backed Weaver *Ploceus bicolor* [104; Longa River, October 2003]

The song of the endemic subspecies *amaurocephalus* is a series of sweet, pure whistles (Fry & Keith 2004), which does not audibly differ from



**Figure 18.** Sonograms of various vocalisations of (A) Gabela Helmetshrike *Prionops gabela*, and (B) some matching sonograms for Retz's Helmetshrike *P. retzi*, to illustrate the similarity of some calls.

Sonogrammes d'émissions vocales diverses (A) du Bagadaïs de Gabela *Prionops gabela*, et (B) quelques sonogrammes correspondants pour le Bagadaïs de Retz *P. retzi*, pour illustrer la similitude de certains cris.

the range of songs displayed by other races of the species.

#### Golden-backed Bishop *Euplectes aureus* [105; Longa River, October 2003]

Recordings of calls from a single bird in non-breeding plumage are the first of birds from Angola (Mills 2007). Calls are the typical sharp *tsip* (Fry & Keith 2004) and do not audibly differ from calls of birds on São Tomé (Chappuis 2000), where the species is thought to have been introduced (Christy & Clarke 1998).

#### Red-faced Crimsonwing *Cryptospiza reichenovii* [106; Kumbira, August 2005]

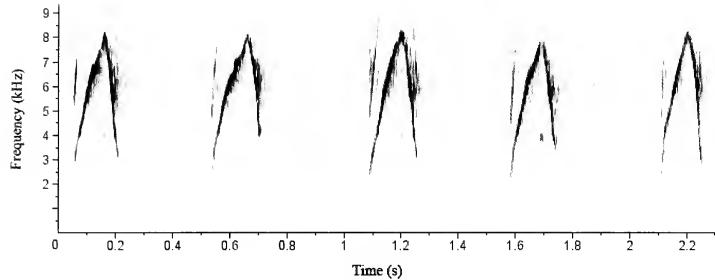
Recordings of the nominate subspecies, which also occurs on Bioko and in Cameroon, are presented on Mills (2007). Vocalisations consist of typical, repeated, high-pitched notes and trills (Hockey *et al.* 2005) that cannot be heard to differ consistently from recordings of the subspecies *australis* from Zimbabwe (Gibbon 1995, Chappuis 2000).

#### Dusky Twinspot *Euschistospiza cinereovinacea* [107; Mount Moco IBA, August 2005]

Recordings represent the call described as *tsyip-tsyip* by Goodwin (1982), a repeated short, dry, high-pitched note. Each individual note rises and falls rapidly in pitch from c.4–8 kHz and lasts c.0.2 seconds (Fig. 19). The note was repeated on average every 0.67 seconds (range = 0.5–1.3; n=30 inter-note intervals from two individuals). Because birds flocked (often c.20 individuals per flock) and called simultaneously it was often difficult to identify individual callers in the flock with any certainty, resulting in a small sample size. Calling within a flock was continuous while birds were active, although how regularly any individual bird called is unknown.

#### Pale-billed Firefinch *Lagonosticta landanae* [108; Kumbira, August 2005, and Bimbe, September 2005]

Three different vocalisations are presented on Mills (2007): song (part A–C), high-pitched contact calls (part D) and a buzzy trill (part E). Due to



**Figure 19.** Sonogram of the repeated *tsyip-tsyip* contact call of Dusky Twinspot *Euschistospiza cinereovinacea*.

Sonogramme du cri de contact *tsièp-tsièp* répété du Sénégal sombre *Euschistospiza cinereovinacea*.

the complexity of firefinch vocalisations, it is difficult to find analogous vocalisations for comparison of African Firefinch *L. rubricata* and Jameson's Firefinch *L. rhodopareia* (Gibbon 1995). The song (Fig. 20) comprises various whistles and trills. Based on a much larger sample of recordings, Payne (2004) considers the vocalisations of *landanae* to be very similar to those of African Firefinch *L. rubricata* and treats *landanae* as a subspecies of African Firefinch.

**Yellow-crowned Canary** *Serinus flavivertex* [109; Mount Moco IBA, August 2005]

Song and flight-calls of the endemic subspecies *huillensis* consist of the typical 'tinkling jumble of sweet notes and trills' and 'rising sweet' (Fry & Keith 2004) respectively.

**Black-faced Canary** *Serinus canarius* [110; Mount Moco IBA, August 2005]

The song of the endemic subspecies *hildegardae* is a series of clear, high-pitched whistles, not dissimilar to those recorded for the nominate subspecies at Ndola, Zambia (Chappuis 2000), although neither this individual nor any of the 50+ individuals heard during August–October 2005

in the Angolan highlands or along the Angolan scarp were heard to make the rattles or buzzy notes described by Fry & Keith (2004) and audible on Chappuis (2000).

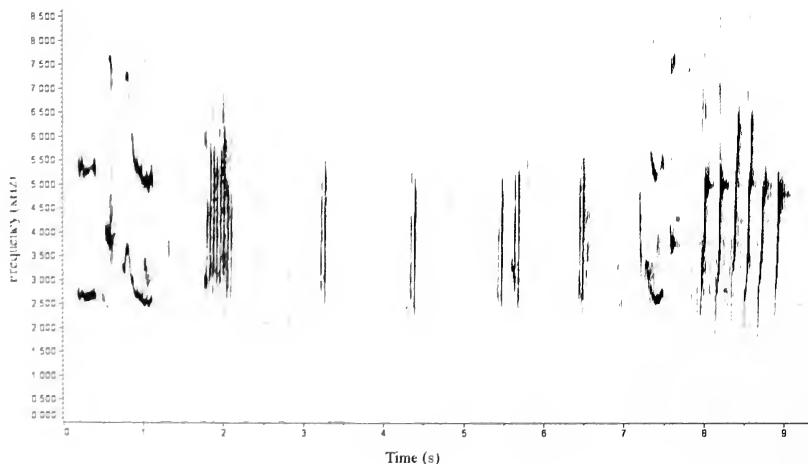
#### **Thick-billed Seedeater** *Serinus burtoni* [111;

Mount Moco IBA, August 2005]

The song of the isolated Angolan population of the subspecies *tanganjicae* is fairly typical of the species, although Fry & Keith (2004) do not mention the inclusion of mimicry in the song. The recorded individual mimics Red-faced Cisticola, Dusky Twinspot, Bronze Sunbird, Ludwig's Double-collared Sunbird and, possibly, Black-faced Canary among the typical complex of trills, churrs and twitters.

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**Figure 20.** Sonogram of Pale-billed Firefinch *Lagonosticta landanae* song, consisting of various whistles and trills.

Sonogramme du chant de l'Amarante de Landana *Lagonosticta landanae*, consistant de sifflements et trilles variés.

provided valuable comments on the manuscript, which vastly improved its contents.

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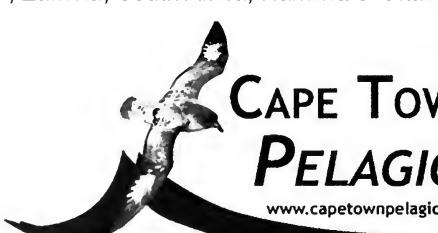
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# Rediscovery of the Lake Lufira Weaver *Ploceus ruweti*

Michel Louette<sup>a</sup> and Michel Hasson<sup>b</sup>

**Redécouverte du Tisserin de Ruwet *Ploceus ruweti*.** Le Tisserin de Ruwet *Ploceus ruweti*, précédemment connu uniquement de l'holotype récolté en 1960 au lac de barrage sur la Lufira (Lac Tshangalele) au Katanga, République Démocratique du Congo (=Congo-Kinshasa), a été retrouvé comme nicheur en nombre à la même localité en février–mars 2009. L'espèce est décrite sur la base de photos; un individu a été mesuré et comparé à l'holotype ; le chant a été enregistré.

**Summary.** The Lake Lufira Weaver *Ploceus ruweti*, known previously solely from the holotype collected at Lake Lufira (= Lake Tshangalele) in Katanga, south-eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (Congo-Kinshasa), in 1960, was rediscovered nesting at the same locality in February–March 2009.

In 1926 a dam was constructed on the upper Lufira River, Katanga, south-east Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC; Congo-Kinshasa) (Ruwet 1962, 1963, 1965), at c.11°S 27°E, downstream of a vast marsh. At maximum capacity, the lake covered 410 km<sup>2</sup> and the mean depth was 2.6 m. A map presented by Ruwet (1963) shows the different vegetation zones of the area and many villages. The lake and its shores have changed since then. The water level has been low for many years, resulting in much of the area silting up and encroachment by riverine vegetation. The area near the shore is dominated by marshy vegetation, which gives way to a zone of water lilies; only the central part, 3–4 km from land, is open water (Fig. 1). During dry spells, the lake is almost completely dry, with aquatic and semi-aquatic vegetation overtaking large surfaces. This has occurred frequently in recent years, creating excellent habitat for aquatic birds. Although the area is not easily accessed, it is regularly visited by fishermen in canoes.

In this habitat, Ruwet (1962, 1965) found a 'yellow, rufous and black' weaver, which he identified as '*Textor* (= *Ploceus*) *melanoccephalus* ssp.', to be common. However, the local taxon of the Yellow-backed Weaver is *P. m. duboisi*, of which the breeding male is yellow and black only, lacking any rufous. The sole specimen, collected by Ruwet at Kinsamba (10°50'S 27°03'E) in 1960, was examined by several specialists, but no consensus as to its identity was reached. Eventually, it was described as a new species, *Ploceus ruweti*, by Louette & Benson (1982).

Ruwet was the first and, until now, also the last to observe *P. ruweti*, or Lake Lufira Weaver, in the field. It has not been found in neighbouring Zambia (Dowsett *et al.* 2008) or Angola (Dean 2000). Louette (1984) demonstrated that those weavers collected in Angola near the lakes of Dilolo and Cameia (possibly as non-breeding visitors) can probably be referred to Southern Masked Weaver *P. velatus*. *P. ruweti* is currently listed as Data Deficient by BirdLife International (2009).

Following ML's suggestion, MH visited Lake Lufira on 20–22 February and 20–22 March 2009, specifically to find this weaver, and observed Lake Lufira Weaver colonies in the centre of the lake, close to the ancient riverbed. The birds frequented 'Ambatch' *Aeschynomene elaphroxylon* trees and also the reed *Phragmites mauritianus* and the grass *Vossia cuspidata* (Fig. 2). The species proved to be not at all rare in this habitat and was seen at many places. The position of three colonies was marked using GPS, at 10°52'51"S 27°03'29"E (1,126 m), 10°53'14"S 27°01'32"E (1,127 m) and 10°52'53"S 27°02'23"E (1,125 m), respectively. During a subsequent visit, on 2 May 2009, the colonies were deserted and only a few Lake Lufira Weavers were seen. Local inhabitants claim that the birds are observed away from the lake in the latter half of the dry season, in July–October.

## The Katanga marsh weaver 'archipelago'

There are four taxa of isolated marsh weavers in the Katanga lakes region (see Fig. 3, from Louette 1987; also Fry & Keith 2004, Cotterill 2006). (1) Tanganyika Masked Weaver *P. reichardi* from Lake Tanganyika to Lake Rukwa, and also in

Ruaha National Park, Tanzania (Britton 1980). (2) Katanga Masked Weaver *P. (k.) katangae* in the Moero / Luapula / Bangweulu drainage. Birds from Kafubu ( $11^{\circ}45'S$   $27^{\circ}34'E$ ) and Kimilolo ( $11^{\circ}43'S$   $27^{\circ}26'E$ ) in non-breeding plumage probably also refer to this taxon, and Benson (1955) mentioned a bird in non-breeding plumage from Sumbu, Lake Tanganyika ( $08^{\circ}30'S$   $30^{\circ}30'E$ ). (3) Lake Upemba Masked Weaver *P. (k.) upembiae*, which is known from three localities, Bukama, Mabwe and Kadia, in the Upemba marshes, but four non-breeding specimens, from Kiambi ( $07^{\circ}15'S$   $28^{\circ}00'E$ ) and one from Manono ( $07^{\circ}18'S$   $27^{\circ}25'E$ ) in the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences, Brussels, Belgium also correspond to this taxon. The birds from Kiambi and Manono, localities outside the marsh region, most probably refer to local migrants. (4) Lake Lufira Weaver, which until now was known solely from the holotype collected at Lake Lufira (or Tshangalele).

## Taxonomy

Species-level taxonomy within the genus *Ploceus* is much debated. Since its description, Lake Lufira Weaver has been considered part of the *P. velatus* complex or 'superspecies' (Louette 1987, Craig 2004). In the Sahel belt and in East Africa this complex is represented by Vitelline Masked Weaver *P. vitellinus*, a dry-savanna species that ranges no further south than Uganda and central Tanzania. In southern Africa, the superspecies is represented by several accepted races, in a cline of decreasing size from the Cape towards coastal Angola and central Zambia. This southern African group, Southern Masked Weaver *P. velatus*, occurs in savanna, with the race *tahatali* and its close geographical neighbour *shelleyi*, which occupy the northern part of this range, being *Acacia* woodland birds.

Lake Lufira Weaver to a certain extent resembles, and is sometimes regarded as, a subspecies of Tanganyika Masked Weaver (Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire 1993). Because *upembiae* has a stouter bill than *katangae*, whilst males are greenish, not yellowish on the neck, and females and birds in eclipse plumage are decidedly washed olive dorsally, lacking the warm brownish hue on the mantle of *katangae* (cf. Louette & Benson 1982), Louette (1987) concluded that it was inconsistent to regard *upembiae* as a race of *P. katangae* (as originally proposed by Verheyen 1953) whilst treating the other two Katanga

marsh weavers as different species. Benson (1955) examined two breeding-plumaged female *reichardi* and found them 'distinctly greener above than ... *katangae*, in fact very like ... *upembiae* in this respect'. Except for this resemblance to *upembiae*, *reichardi* is close to *katangae*, differing mainly in the strong chestnut wash to the ventral surface in the male's breeding plumage. The latter two taxa might belong to a single species (*reichardi*), but as yet no intermediates are known, although Benson (1955) mentioned two males from Mweru Marsh (on the border of DRC and Zambia) (*katangae*) with a chestnut crown. There is also a male *reichardi* from the Rukwa Valley in Tanzania (BMNH 1954.38.3, held in the Natural History Museum, Tring, UK) with only chestnut, no black, above the bill. Louette (1987) considered all four taxa to be specifically distinct.

The systematics of these weavers should be clarified once the results of a molecular phylogeny being prepared by ML become available. Preliminary results reveal that Lake Lufira Weaver is indeed a member of the *velatus* complex, to which Golden-backed Weaver *P. jacksoni* is also related; it is far from unlikely that Katanga Masked Weaver and Upemba Masked Weaver will prove to be different species.

## Identification problems

In the field, Lake Lufira Weaver could be confused with Katanga Masked Weaver, but the latter lacks such completely rufous underparts, and with Tanganyika Masked Weaver, which does not possess a black crown, whilst neither of these confusion species is presently known to occur near Lake Lufira. Golden-backed Weaver is also very similar, but the black of the head reaches onto the nape, the black and rufous on the breast appear more clearly demarcated, whilst the brown on the breast seems also to be a shade darker. Its bill is slightly heavier than in the two specimens (the holotype and a new one, see below) of Lake Lufira Weaver. Golden-backed Weaver also does not occur in Katanga.

## Description

MH was able to take many photographs, and a dead bird was brought to him. The adult male in breeding plumage (Figs. 4–5) is orange-chestnut below; this colour covers the whole ventral surface (more so than in the illustration in Fry & Keith

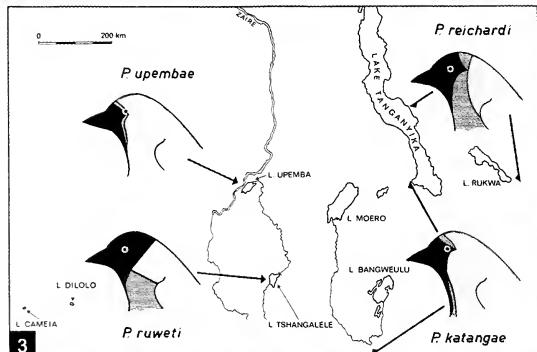


Figure 1. View of Lake Lufira, Katanga, DRC (Congo-Kinshasa), 21 March 2009 (Michel Hasson)

Vue sur le Lac Lufira, Katanga, RDC (Congo-Kinshasa), 21 mars 2009 (Michel Hasson)

**Figure 2.** Nests in habitat of Lake Lufira Weaver *Ploceus ruweti*, Lake Lufira, DRC (Congo-Kinshasa), 21 February 2009 (Michel Hasson)

Nids et habitat du Tisserin de Ruwet *Ploceus ruweti*, Lac Lufira, RDC (Congo-Kinshasa), 21 mars 2009 (Michel Hasson)

**Figure 3.** Distribution of the Katanga marsh weaver group. Drawing by Alain Reygel.

Distribution du groupe de tisserins des marais du Katanga. Dessin par Alain Reygel.

**Figures 4–5.** Adult male Lake Lufira Weaver *Ploceus ruweti* in breeding plumage, Lake Lufira, DRC (Congo-Kinshasa), 22 March 2009 (Michel Hasson)

Tisserin de Ruwet *Ploceus ruweti* mâle adulte en plumage nuptial, Lac Lufira, RDC (Congo-Kinshasa), 22 mars 2009 (Michel Hasson)

**Figure 6.** Adult female Lake Lufira Weaver *Ploceus ruweti* in breeding plumage, Lake Lufira, DRC (Congo-Kinshasa), 21 March 2009 (Michel Hasson)

Tisserin de Ruwet *Ploceus ruweti* femelle adulte en plumage nuptial, Lac Lufira, RDC (Congo-Kinshasa), 22 mars 2009 (Michel Hasson)



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11



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**Figure 7.** Adult female Lake Lufira Weaver *Ploceus ruweti* in breeding plumage near its nest, Lake Lufira, DRC (Congo-Kinshasa), 7 April 2009 (Michel Hasson)

Tisserin de Ruwet *Ploceus ruweti* femelle adulte en plumage nuptial auprès de son nid, Lac Lufira, RDC (Congo-Kinshasa), 22 mars 2009 (Michel Hasson)

**Figure 8.** Fledgling Lake Lufira Weaver *Ploceus ruweti*, Lake Lufira, DRC (Congo-Kinshasa), 22 March 2009 (Michel Hasson)

Jeune Tisserin de Ruwet *Ploceus ruweti*, Lac Lufira, DRC (Congo-Kinshasa), 22 mars 2009 (Michel Hasson)

Captions continue on page 172

2004), except that on photographs the central belly of some birds is yellow, washed orange-chestnut over the surrounding feathers. The black on the head does not reach the nape. The back is deep yellow, streaked greenish in some. The undertail-coverts are washed rufous. The irides seem dark red at a distance, and one bird in the hand was compared with the paint catalogue DYNA COAT of Sikkens, where colour 413, A6 was closest. Compared to Munsell (1960), this dark red colour matches almost Hue 2.5YR 7/10. The bill is black; the legs are greyish-beige. On 2 May 2009, a bird was photographed that could still be recognised as a Lake Lufira Weaver (probably a male) based on size, iris colour and belly colour, but which had a yellow throat and a greenish top of the head (without black): it was apparently moulting into non-breeding plumage.

The female (Figs. 6–7) has no black and almost no rufous in its plumage, except for a brownish wash to the underparts in some individuals. The general colour is more greenish than that of the male. Two wingbars are apparent: a distinct upper one on the median coverts and an indistinct lower one on the greater coverts. The eye is dark and the bill greyish.

#### Captions to figures on page 171

**Figure 9.** Adult male in breeding plumage and fledgling Lake Lufira Weaver *Ploceus ruweti*, Lake Lufira, DRC (Congo-Kinshasa), 7 April 2009 (Michel Hasson)

Tisserin de Ruwet *Ploceus ruweti* mâle adulte en plumage nuptial avec un jeune, Lac Lufira, RDC (Congo-Kinshasa), 22 mars 2009 (Michel Hasson)

**Figure 10.** Adult male Lake Lufira Weaver *Ploceus ruweti* nest building, Lake Lufira, DRC (Congo-Kinshasa), 21 March 2009 (Michel Hasson)

Tisserin de Ruwet *Ploceus ruweti* mâle adulte construisant un nid, Lac Lufira, RDC (Congo-Kinshasa), 21 mars 2009 (Michel Hasson)

**Figure 11.** Eggs of Lake Lufira Weaver *Ploceus ruweti*, Lake Lufira, DRC (Congo-Kinshasa), 21 March 2009 (Michel Hasson)

Oeufs du Tisserin de Ruwet *Ploceus ruweti*, Lac Lufira, RDC (Congo-Kinshasa), 21 mars 2009 (Michel Hasson)

**Figure 12.** Nest of Lake Lufira Weaver *Ploceus ruweti*, Lake Lufira, DRC (Congo-Kinshasa), 21 March 2009 (Michel Hasson)

Nid du Tisserin de Ruwet *Ploceus ruweti*, Lac Lufira, RDC (Congo-Kinshasa), 21 mars 2009 (Michel Hasson)

**Table 1.** Measurements of two breeding male specimens of Lake Lufira Weaver *Ploceus ruweti* (taken by ML using callipers and ruler; in mm, to the nearest 0.5 mm).

**Tableau 1.** Mensurations de deux spécimens mâles en plumage nuptial du Tisserin de Ruwet *Ploceus ruweti* (prises par ML avec un compas et une règle ; en mm, à 0,5 mm près).

	Wing-chord	Tail	Tarsus	Culmen
Holotype (RMCA N°113379)	71.0	45.0	20.5	16.0
Dead bird from 2009	68.5	45.5	21.0	16.0

The fledgling has the nondescript plumage common to all small weavers (Fig. 8). An apparent immature was seen on 2 May 2009. Once, a male was observed feeding a dependent fledgling (Fig. 9). Craig (2004) mentions that male Southern Masked Weavers rarely feed their fledged young.

#### Vocalisations

Lake Lufira Weaver is rarely silent, emitting a short call from anywhere within its territory. One male made a separate call, ending in a trill, which was probably a territorial vocalisation. This male was starting to build several nests in the same tree; two hours later the territory was (temporarily?) vacant and no nest was in place yet.

The voice of one male in territorial dispute with a neighbour was sound-recorded. This is a typical weaver sound. D. Oschadleus (*in litt.* 2009) remarked: ‘the song sounds very similar to that of *Ploceus velatus*, maybe not even easily distinguishable, since *velatus* has so much variation in many attributes (but song differences have not yet been explored for different *velatus* populations). A sonogram analysis of the *velatus* and *ruweti* songs may yield differences’, whilst A. Craig (*in litt.* 2009) commented ‘certainly the song is of Masked Weaver *Ploceus velatus* type; I wouldn’t rate it as highly distinctive’.

#### Breeding

The breeding period given by Ruwet (1965) was confirmed by MH’s observations: February–March (rains). In February most nests were still under construction; by March a small spout was present on some of them. Only a few nests were placed together; e.g. in a small colony of 4–6 nests (some unfinished), placed at the end or in the middle part of the spiky branches of *Aeschynomene elaphroxylon*, which trees attain 4 m height. The

nests were initially 1–2 m above the water surface (February), but due to heavy rain, they were only c.0.5–1.5 m above the water by March. At least two colonies were sited close to a wasp nest (*Ropalidia* sp., probably *cincta*; locally known as 'Matembo') (Fig. 7).

Males were engaged in nest weaving at the time of MH's second visit, although the fledgling and the juvenile were also seen then (Fig. 10). As mentioned, several nests were constructed in close proximity, although one of them was already occupied by a breeding female. This nest contained two eggs; their colour was very pale green with many brown spots, more concentrated at the larger end (Fig. 11). One egg measured was 19.4 × 13.9 mm.

The nest measured 10.5 × 7.5 cm, with a spoutless opening of 2.3 cm placed 1.5 cm from the top (Fig. 12). However, the photographs reveal that there is variation in the form and size of the nests. A small layer of unattached vegetable origin appears to be present on the 'floor'. A male also visited this nest, but the bouts of time spent by the female were longer.

Any small bird approaching the colony (even a female weaver) was met aggressively. When the female eventually entered the nest she was accompanied by the male. When another male weaver came close to collect nest material, the territorial male chased it, and made a short display with trembling wings spread and uttering the territorial call. During the 2 May visit, the territories of the Lake Lufira Weaver were vacant and apparently taken over by Spectacled Weaver *Ploceus ocularis*.

## Acknowledgements

Alain Reygel examined all of the specimens and photographs together with ML. Robert Prŷs-Jones of the Natural History Museum, Tring, UK, facilitated study of weaver specimens by ML. Dieter Oschadleus and Adrian Craig commented on the sound-recording (the latter also on the text) and Marc De Meyer identified the wasp from a photograph.

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# The song of presumed Prigogine's Nightjar *Caprimulgus prigoginei* and its possible occurrence in Lower Guinea

Françoise Dowsett-Lemaire

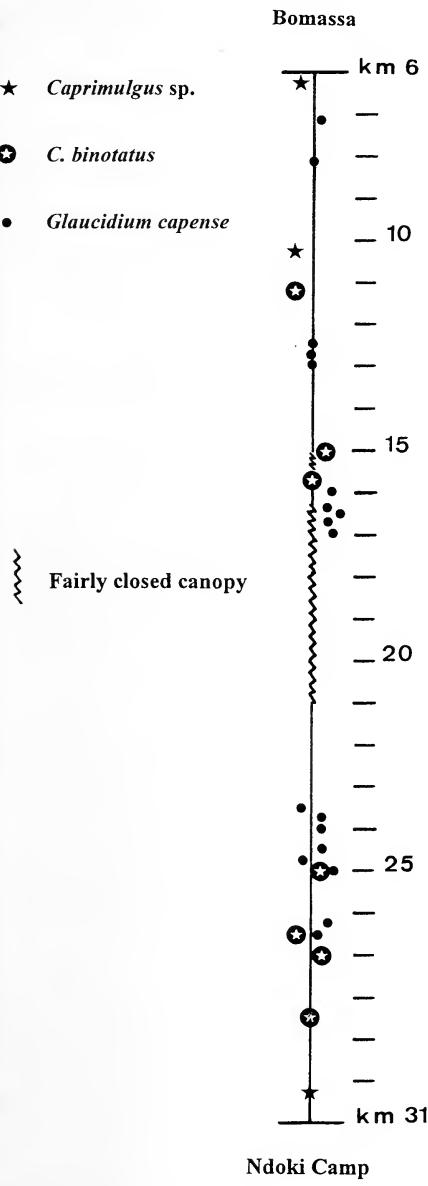
**A propos du chant du présumé Engoulevent de Prigogine *Caprimulgus prigoginei* et de sa présence en Basse Guinée.** Un chant inconnu d'engoulevent forestier *Caprimulgus* sp. enregistré dans le massif de l'Itombwe (Congo-Kinshasa) et au Congo-Brazzaville appartient probablement à l'Engoulevent de Prigogine *C. prigoginei*. La silhouette et la taille des oiseaux vus au crépuscule correspondent à ce qu'on connaît de l'unique spécimen de cette espèce récolté dans l'Itombwe. L'espèce a été rencontrée plusieurs fois au nord du Congo-Brazzaville, au sud-est du Cameroun et probablement aussi au nord-est du Gabon. Le chant ressemble superficiellement à celui de l'Engoulevent à queue blanche *C. natalensis* mais s'en distingue par la structure des notes et la tonalité ; les cris sont courts et râpeux. Cet engoulevent préfère les forêts à voûte ouverte, de type semi-semperfibre à basse altitude, ou de type semperfibre en montagne. Il est certainement le plus rare des trois engoulevents forestiers d'Afrique Centrale.

**Summary.** An unknown song of a forest nightjar *Caprimulgus* sp. recorded in the Itombwe massif (Congo-Kinshasa) and in Congo-Brazzaville is probably of Prigogine's Nightjar *C. prigoginei*. The shape and size of birds seen at dusk correspond to what is known from the single specimen of this species collected in Itombwe. The species was encountered several times in northern Congo-Brazzaville, in south-east Cameroon and probably also in north-east Gabon. The song superficially resembles that of Swamp Nightjar *C. natalensis* but differs in the structure of the notes and the timbre; the calls are short and harsh. This nightjar prefers forest with a broken canopy. It is undoubtedly the rarest of the three forest nightjars in Central Africa.

In his recent review of 'lost', obscure and poorly known African bird species, Butchart (2007) briefly drew attention to the fact that Prigogine's or Itombwe Nightjar *Caprimulgus prigoginei* had possibly been encountered in several locations in Central Africa, far from the type locality of the single specimen in existence, a female collected in Itombwe in eastern Congo-Kinshasa in 1955 (Louette 1990). These observations are all based on the distinctive song of a small nightjar heard in several places in Congo-Brazzaville and adjacent Cameroon, seen at dusk a few times and tape-recorded by me in Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park (NP) in April 1996 and May 1997. By a strange coincidence, T. Butynski tape-recorded an identical song in the Itombwe forest in April 1996 (near Kilumbi Camp, at 03°52'S 28°56'E, to the south-east of the type locality). Butchart's note has prompted me to publish a more detailed description of this song supported by sonograms, together with notes on behaviour and habitat in Lower Guinea.

## Observations in Lower Guinea

I first came across this mysterious nightjar in Odzala National Park (Congo-Brazzaville), when I heard it only once, just before dawn on 3 April 1994. The bird was singing in forest immediately in front of our bedroom, at 05.00 hrs: it gave a few bursts of song, with a series of *tchoc* notes, at a rate of about five per second, as written in my notebook. R. J. Dowsett and I were resident in Odzala NP for over a year, and as I never heard it again, this was presumably a wanderer looking for a new territory. The identity of the nightjar was not determined, and I later neglected to mention it in publications concerning Odzala (Dowsett-Lemaire 1997a, 2001, Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 1998b). The song was reminiscent of that of Swamp Nightjar *C. natalensis*, a savanna species of extensive dry grassland, dambos or other wet grassland, which happened to be very common in the savannas of Odzala, but the timbre was noticeably different. The forest where it sang briefly was mostly evergreen and partially swampy, with a fairly closed but uneven canopy, along the Lékénié River. The altitude was c.400 m.



**Figure 1.** Location of calling ?Prigogine's Nightjar *Caprimulgus ?prigoginei* and of Brown Nightjar *Veles binotatus* along the track between Bomassa and Ndoki in Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park (map taken from Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 1997).

Localisation des chanteurs du probable Engoulement de Prigogine *Caprimulgus prigoginei* et de l'Engoulement à deux taches *Veles binotatus* le long de la piste reliant Bomassa à Ndoki au Parc National de Nouabalé-Ndoki (carte tirée de Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 1997).

The second time I encountered this nightjar was in semi-evergreen rain forest in Nouabalé-Ndoki NP, a few hundred metres from Ndoki

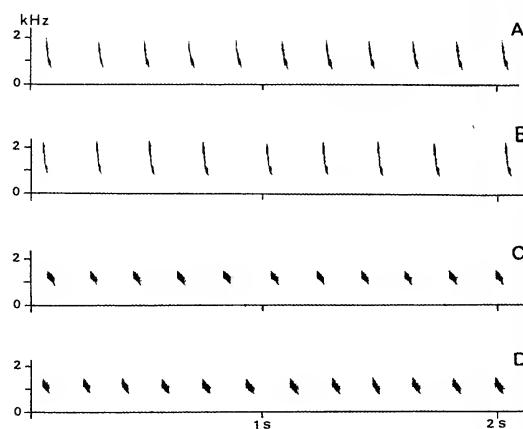
Camp, in April 1996 (Dowsett-Lemaire 1997b). The forest there has a naturally open canopy but is nevertheless very dense, with a closed, 20-m tall overstorey; emergents can reach 40 m. The altitude is c.350 m. One pair seemed to occupy a territory in that area: I heard and taped-recorded a bird that sang briefly at dusk on 4 April. The next evening, I searched for it at dusk (18.00 hrs) and as there was no sound, tape playback was tried and elicited a response: a bird sang for a few seconds then came close to me, crossed the narrow track and sang on the other side, perched in a tangle of lianas up a trunk at a height of c.20 m. It also gave a harsh, rolled call that I transcribed in French as *rèrèrè* (or *rek-rek-rek*). While it was thus calling, a second bird, presumably the mate, flew across the track then around me at a distance of 2 m. It appeared small and stocky, and in the dim light I could not see any pale patches on the wings or tail. I recorded more of the song on 5 April, a short series of staccato notes lasting 4–12 seconds; the bird was then singing in a dense patch of vegetation at a height of c.10 m, and no longer showed an interest in playback. The behaviour of the mate coming so close to me might suggest the pair was somewhat alarmed and possibly breeding. No bird was singing the next evening but I saw a small nightjar fly over the track. I moved to another camp the next day.

In late April–May 1997 I was back at Nouabalé-Ndoki with R. J. Dowsett, and the main reason for our visit was to try to catch this nightjar. The tape used for playback was in fact part of the recording obtained by T. Butynski, as there was less reverberation from vegetation on this one. As described in more detail in Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett (1998a) we searched systematically for nightjars in the second half of the night along 25 km of track, between Bomassa and Ndoki. In addition to seven Brown Nightjars *Veles binotatus*, we located three calling *Caprimulgus* sp., two of which were off track, in areas of very dense Marantaceae understorey (one was 6 km from Bomassa, the other 10 km: Fig. 1). The third was in exactly the same position as in 1996, near Ndoki Camp. It was considered the first two birds were inaccessible, and our best chance was to try to mist-net the territory holder near Ndoki. Nets were erected in two places close to the main songposts for four nights and displaced after the first two nights, between 12 and 18 May. To no

avail. The bird was considerably more vocal than in 1996 and its behaviour suggested it had lost its mate. It sang spontaneously for long periods at various high points in dense vegetation (estimated at 10–20 m) and also in the lower canopy of an *Atranella* emergent at a height of c.30 m. Playback of the Itombwe tape prompted it to sing louder and higher rather than come close to the tape—although it did once, flying nearby and giving some dry *rek, rek* calls before resuming the song from a perch. More recordings were obtained, and some song phrases lasted at least three minutes and ten seconds; the tempo was exactly 11 notes in ten seconds. Two of the three calling *Caprimulgus* sp. were 1.0–1.5 km distant from territories occupied by Brown Nightjar, the third was more isolated (Fig. 1). Part of the 1997 tape was published by Ranft & Cleere (1998).

Just before (re)visiting Nouabalé-Ndoki, in April 1997, R. J. Dowsett and I had spent 12 days exploring the Lobéké Faunal Reserve (now a national park) in adjacent south-east Cameroon. Of the four nights we spent at Boulou Camp, I came across the mystery nightjar once, on our first night there (21st): one sang c.1.2 km east of the camp, rather far away, just before 21.00 hrs. I called it up with the Itombwe tape, and it came much closer, singing for over 15 minutes at a height of 15–20 m in dense vegetation. It also called (the dry *rek, rek*), and eventually crossed the road, sang on the other side and then much further away. There was no sign of this bird on the following three nights, and it was perhaps (as in Odzala) a local wanderer. It was not found again on a second visit to Boulou on 16–19 April 1999, nor anywhere else in Lobéké in three visits (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 2000). The forest in Lobéké is semi-evergreen with a fairly open canopy, much as in Nouabalé-Ndoki.

During further surveys in south-east Cameroon in December 1997–January 1998 this nightjar was found at another two localities, in Nki Reserve and at Kupandaka in the Nki buffer zone (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 1998c). One sang very briefly on 26 December at Kupandaka at dusk, in slightly swampy forest on the edge of Kupandaka swamp. Another sang, also rather briefly, in dryland forest on the edge of Mala swamp in Nki on 4 and 6 January. In the latter area, the forest type is transitional between semi-evergreen and evergreen rain forest, with pockets



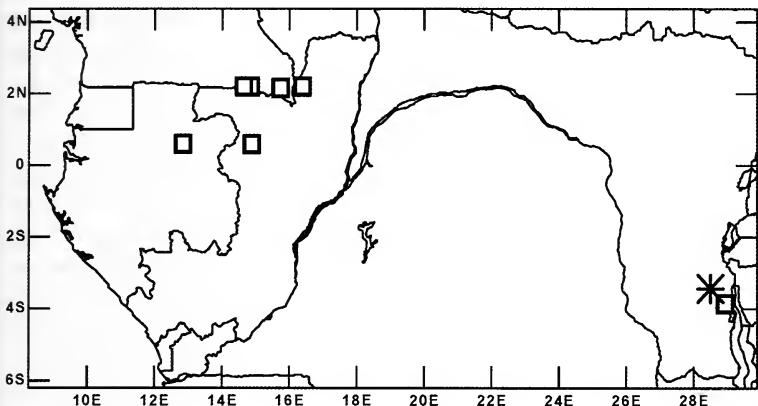
**Figure 2.** Sonograms illustrating the songs of Swamp Nightjar *Caprimulgus natalensis* (A from Zambia, in Stjernstedt 1986, and B from southern Congo-Brazzaville, recorded by FD-L) and presumed Prigogine's Nightjar *Caprimulgus prigoginei* (C from Nouabalé-Ndoki in Congo-Brazzaville recorded by FD-L, and D from Itombwe, eastern Congo-Kinshasa recorded by T. Butynski). Sonograms produced on a Kay Electric Sonagraph 7029A, using wide band filter.

Sonogrammes des chants de l'Engoulevent à queue blanche *Caprimulgus natalensis* (A provenant de Zambie, publié par Stjernstedt 1986, et B du sud du Congo-Brazzaville, enregistré par FD-L) et de l'Engoulevent présumé de Prigogine *Caprimulgus prigoginei* (C provenant de Nouabalé-Ndoki, Congo-Brazzaville, enregistré par FD-L et D provenant de l'Itombwe au Congo-Kinshasa oriental, enregistré par T. Butynski). Sonogrammes produits avec un spectrographe Kay Electric 7029A, en bande large.

of closed-canopy forest. Neither of these two birds reacted to playback; after the big rains ended in November, many species were just starting to call around Christmas. The altitude of the three records in south-east Cameroon is from 350 m (Nki) to 550 m (Lobéké).

One other potential locality for the presumed Prigogine's Nightjar in Central Africa is M'Passa in north-east Gabon, as already mentioned by Dowsett-Lemaire in Butchart (2007). That some bird(s) sang like Swamp Nightjar but in forest (where the latter is inherently unlikely) strongly suggests this species instead. This was in April–May 1985, close to the Ivindo River (Brosset & Erard 1986: 89); unfortunately, no tape-recording was obtained (C. Erard pers. comm.).

Overall, the months of vocal activity span the main dry season (from December) and start of the rains (in April–May) for the latitude of Nouabalé-



**Figure 3.** Map showing the probable distribution of Prigogine's Nightjar *Caprimulgus prigoginei* based on observations of singing birds (squares), and the site of the single specimen (star).

Carte montrant la distribution probable de l'Engoulevent de Prigogine *Caprimulgus prigoginei*, basée sur les observations de chanteurs (carrés), et le site de récolte de l'unique spécimen (étoile).

Ndoki and south-east Cameroon. In Odzala and M'Passa, the rainfall is bimodal, and the period March–May coincides with the short rains, following the hot dry season of December–February. Nightjars are expected to breed in the main dry season; the Brown Nightjar captured on 16 May 1997 at Ndoki was halfway through primary moult, albeit still very vocal.

### The voice of presumed Prigogine's Nightjar

The first impression of anyone hearing this bird's song is how similar it sounds to the song of Swamp Nightjar. Indeed, when I first sent a copy of my tape from Congo-Brazzaville to C. Chappuis in 1996, he replied it had to be Swamp Nightjar. He was convinced otherwise only after I sent him the resulting sonograms. Fig. 2 shows the peculiarities of the two songs quite clearly. They have a similar temporal pattern, with five notes or slightly more per second, but the structure of the notes is very different. The *tjok tjok tjok* of Swamp Nightjar show a 'glissandi' with a sharp decrease in frequency whereas the notes of ?Prigogine's Nightjar are rather square, with only a moderate decrease in frequency. The resulting timbre is different, with ?Prigogine's sounding lower pitched and harder. The call notes of the two species are completely different, as those of ?Prigogine's are harsh and rolled, whilst those of Swamp Nightjar consist of a very distinctive melodious tremolo (Chappuis 2000). Swamp Nightjar is a bird of extensive grassland, wet or not, and avoids forest (there are no records from the Itombwe massif: Prigogine 1971). Thus anyone hearing a song resembling that of Swamp Nightjar but coming from dense forest should be on the alert.

### Discussion

The tape from the Itombwe was obtained at an altitude of 1,860 m, from open-canopy forest on a hillside c.4 km from the nearest grassland; the bird was not seen (T. Butynski *in litt.* 1997). The type specimen came from an altitude of 1,280 m (Louette 1990). Incidentally, Butchart's (2007) mention of Curry-Lindahl (1960) in reference to the Itombwe specimen is not relevant, as this paper contains no information on Prigogine's specimen, nor to Bates's Nightjar *C. batesi* to which Prigogine (1971) had tentatively attributed it. The altitude of the birds encountered in Central Africa is of course much lower. If confirmed to refer to Prigogine's Nightjar, this would make it a Guineo-Congolian endemic rather than an Afromontane species (Fig. 3).

Comparisons of the tapes from Itombwe and Congo-Brazzaville show beyond doubt that we are dealing with the same nightjar, and what I saw of it a few times does not exclude Prigogine's Nightjar, based on size and silhouette. The size is comparable to that of Brown Nightjar, but the stocky appearance is due to a short tail, and indeed measurements of the female specimen of Prigogine's Nightjar reveal it to be the shortest-tailed nightjar in Africa (Louette 1990). An alternative possibility is that of a completely new species of nightjar, but this seems less likely.

The habitat preferred by this nightjar in Central Africa is semi-evergreen rain forest with a broken canopy, and a broken canopy is also characteristic of forest on slopes of hills and massifs (as in the Itombwe). The link between the Itombwe and the semi-evergreen forest block around the Congo-Cameroon border is via the northern edge



**Figure 4.** Tall forest in Nki Reserve near Mala bai, where all three forest nightjars occurred: Bates's *Caprimulgus batesi*, Brown *Veles binotatus* and ?Prigogine's *C. prigoginei* (Françoise Dowsett-Lemaire)

Forêt de la réserve de Nki près de Mala bai, où les trois engoulevents forestiers se côtoyaient : Engoulement de Bates *Caprimulgus batesi*, Engoulement à deux tâches *Veles binotatus* et ?Engoulement de Prigogine *C. prigoginei* (Françoise Dowsett-Lemaire)

of the Guineo-Congolian region, through the southern Central African Republic and northern Congo-Kinshasa (*cf.* the vegetation map of White 1983). This area remains unsurprisingly very poorly documented. The distribution of Barred Owlet *Glaucidium capense* in Central Africa also seems to follow the same pattern, from the little we know of its presence and habitat preferences for open-canopy forest in Congo-Brazzaville, south-east Cameroon, the southern Central African Republic and eastern Congo-Kinshasa. The form later named *albertinum* was originally treated as *castaneum* (Prigogine 1971, 1985) and the geographical limits between the former (high altitude in the Albertine Rift) and the latter (low altitude) remain to be investigated.

Jackson (2002a, 2002b) classified African nightjars of the genus *Caprimulgus* into two broad categories, 'whistlers' and 'churrers', and found an apparent correlation between the 'whistling' nightjars and a more pronounced emargination of the ninth primary. Overall, 'whistling' nightjars inhabit more densely vegetated environments than 'churrers' (where their songs would carry better through dense vegetation), and a more pronounced emargination of P9 is considered to give them an advantage at take-off in forested areas (Jackson 2002a). Since Prigogine's Nightjar has, in all likelihood, a churring song, it is abnormal in having developed this type of song in forest and in having also reduced P9 emargination (as in savanna nightjars). But the square-shaped structure of the *tchoc* note is sufficiently different from that of all savanna churring nightjars (a thin vertical bar, slightly down-curved in Swamp Nightjar) that one may assume it is adapted to a forest environment. Nevertheless, the reason why Prigogine's Nightjar should have reduced P9 emargination when it lives in the same type of forest as Brown Nightjar (which has the highest percentage of P9 emargination, Jackson 2002a: 70) remains unexplained—or else the hypothesis of Jackson and others about the relevance of this emargination might not be valid.

This mystery nightjar appears to be much the scarcest of the three forest species present in Congo-Brazzaville and Cameroon, Bates's Nightjar being locally common in some types of swamp forest (e.g. in southern Congo-Brazzaville: Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 1991) whilst Brown Nightjar is less uncommon than ?Prigogine's in dryland forest (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 2008). Two of the few birds I heard did not settle where they sang and appeared to be mere wanderers. It seems the best place to pursue research on this species is the track from Bomassa to Ndoki, as it gives at least a stretch of 25 km (31 km altogether, but the vegetation along the first 6 km near Bomassa is too secondary). The behaviour of the pair near Ndoki Camp in 1996 (flying low etc.) shows that it should be possible to mist-net one with tape playback. But a poorly settled bird or an unmated individual is infinitely more difficult to attract at close range. We never had a chance to return to Nouabalé-Ndoki, but I would encourage anyone with the time and interest to visit the area, one of the wildest places left in Central Africa. Another

area worthy of more attention and visited by many birders is, of course, the M'Passa forest of Gabon. The best months would seem to be January–April, as by May–June breeding may come to an end.

## Acknowledgements

My field work in Odzala (Congo-Brazzaville) was in part supported by the ECOFAC European project, in Nouabalé-Ndoki by BirdLife International (in 1996) and also through the generosity of Mike Fay (in 1997, then director of the park), and in south-east Cameroon by WWF-Cameroon. Thanks are due to Tom Butynski for allowing me to show a sonogram of his tape from the Itombwe. I am grateful to Michel Louette for providing one reference, and to Greg Davies for constructive comments.

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## Appendix. Gazetteer of localities Annexe. Liste des localités citées

Boulou camp, Lobéké, Cameroon	02°09'N 15°44'E
Itombwe (specimen), Congo-Kinshasa	03°26'S 28°30'E
Itombwe (tape-recording), Congo-Kinshasa	03°52'S 28°56'E
Kupandaka, Cameroon	02°12'N 14°51'E
Mala bai, Nki, Cameroon	02°12'N 14°39'E
M'Passa, Gabon	00°35'N 12°50'E
Ndoki camp, Nouabalé-Ndoki, Congo-Brazzaville	02°12'N 16°23'E
Odzala (Mboko camp), Congo-Brazzaville	00°35'N 14°53'E

# Le Tadorne de Belon *Tadorna tadorna* en Afrique de l'Ouest

Olivier Girard

**The Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna* in West Africa.** The Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna* has been observed only relatively recently in West Africa. The first observations were made almost simultaneously in Mauritania and Senegal in 1973. Subsequently, the species has been reported from Niger (since 1982), Ghana (since 1986), Mali (since 1993), and Guinea (in 2006). In total, there are 28 observations, all made between mid October and late February, involving some 187 birds.

**Résumé.** Le Tadorne de Belon *Tadorna tadorna* est une espèce dont l'observation est relativement récente en Afrique de l'Ouest. Les premières données sont réalisées quasi simultanément en Mauritanie et au Sénégal, en 1973. L'espèce est vue ensuite au Niger à partir de 1982, au Ghana à partir de 1986, au Mali à partir de 1993, et en Guinée en 2006. Pour ces six pays, les 28 observations réalisées entre mi-octobre et fin février concernent quelque 187 individus.

Le Tadorne de Belon *Tadorna tadorna* est un visiteur paléarctique rare en Afrique de l'Ouest. Brown *et al.* (1982) ne le mentionnent qu'au Sénégal, sans donner de précisions. Borrow & Demey (2001) le signalent en Mauritanie, dans le nord-ouest du Sénégal, dans le sud du Ghana et dans le nord du Niger. Des données assez récentes permettent d'inclure le Mali et la Guinée dans la liste des pays où l'espèce a été observée. Nous proposons de faire le point sur l'occurrence de l'espèce dans la région.

**Mauritanie.**—Plusieurs données proviennent du Banc d'Arguin, ou de ses proches abords, où le premier oiseau est noté du 25 au 27 novembre 1973 au cap Tessit/cap Timiris ; deux autres observations sont faites le 7 décembre 1980 à Nouadhibou et le 7 janvier 2000 au cap Tafarit (Mahé 1985, Gee 1984, Hagemeijer *et al.* 2004). Plus récemment, au moins 21 individus sont observés le 27 novembre 2005 près de l'île Naïr (R. Cruse in *Bull. ABC* 13 : 104) et une vingtaine sur le Banc d'Arguin en janvier 2006 (Isenmann s. d. [2006]).

Huit oiseaux ont été observés le 18 octobre 2003 à une cinquantaine de kilomètres au sud de Nouakchott (Swiss Ornithological Institute *in litt.* 2008).

Plus au sud, dans le delta du Sénégal, trois oiseaux sont vus le 25 décembre 1995 au Chott Boul (Yésou *et al.* 1996). Ensuite 17 oiseaux sont dénombrés en novembre et décembre 1998 au Chott Boul, puis 42 individus et six autres respectivement au Chott Boul et dans les Toumbos

(mares entre le Parc National du Diawling et le Chott) le 13 janvier 1999, la dernière observation concernant dix oiseaux dénombrés dans l'Aftout es Saheli en janvier 2007 (M. Benmergui *in litt.* 2008).

Enfin, une donnée continentale provient d'Akmakam (21°53'N 11°13'W), donc loin à l'intérieur, où des plumes ont été trouvées en avril 2003 (Salewski *et al.* 2005). L'hypothèse émise par les auteurs 'possibly carried by a raptor' est étonnante : ces plumes correspondant forcément à un oiseau ayant survolé cette région désertique située à près de 500 km de la côte.

**Sénégal.**—Les premières observations concernent sept individus dans le delta du fleuve Sénégal, le 27 décembre 1973, puis deux immatures dans le Parc National des Oiseaux du Djoudj (PNOD), le 21 janvier 1974 (Morel & Morel 1990). Sur le dernier site, quinze individus sont ensuite observés en janvier 1996 (Yésou *et al.* 1996) et un individu en janvier 1997 (Triplet *et al.* 1997), tandis que deux individus sont notés dans le Sine-Saloum, également en janvier 1997 (Dodman *et al.* 1997). Depuis, aucun autre tadorne n'est signalé (Dodman & Diagana 2003 ; V. Schricke *in litt.* 2008).

**Niger.**—La première observation concerne un individu observé le 3 février 1982 sur un lac à 35 km au sud-ouest d'Agadès (Lunais 1983). Sur ce même site, un autre oiseau est vu le 24 janvier 1994 (Niger Bird Database, J. Brouwer *in litt.* 2008). La dernière observation se rapporte à six

individus observés vers le 20 février 2000 sur la mare d'Akadané, située à environ 130 km au nord de Dakoro, par H. Saley (A. Malam Issa *in litt.* 2008)

**Ghana.**—En 1986, deux oiseaux sont vus à Weija, les 8 et 10 janvier, et deux autres sur la lagune de Sakumo, sans précision de date (Grimes 1987). La dernière donnée se rapporte à un individu vu le 11 janvier 2000 sur la lagune de Songor par S. K. Nyame *et al.* (T. Dodman et M. S. Diop comm. pers.)

**Mali.**—Dans un tableau présentant les espèces d'oiseaux d'eau peu communes et rares dans le delta intérieur du Niger, Wymenga *et al.* (2002) mentionnent le Tadorne de Belon avec deux observations et un maximum de trois individus. Vu le manque de précisions, ces données, qui constituerait les premières pour le pays, sont

mentionnées comme ‘à confirmer’ par Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire (2005) dans un article documentant 27 espèces nouvelles pour le Mali. Renseignements pris auprès de l'un des observateurs connaissant très bien l'espèce (J. van der Kamp *in litt.* 2008), ces deux observations doivent être prises en considération. La première concerne un oiseau observé le 26 décembre 1993 sur le lac Débo (van der Kamp 1994), la deuxième trois individus vus le 19 décembre 1998 à Kakagnan (van der Kamp & Diallo 1999). Une troisième observation, concernant six individus, est réalisée le 20 janvier 2006 par moi-même lors du recensement aérien du delta (Girard 2006). Cette espèce m'est particulièrement familière, ayant à longueur d'année à quelques dizaines de mètres de mon bureau, dans les marais d'Olonne (Vendée, France) des dizaines, voire des centaines, de tadornes. A noter la similitude de date avec la donnée guinéenne.

**Tableau 1.** Mentions du Tadorne de Belon *Tadorna tadorna* en Afrique de l'Ouest  
**Table 1.** Records of Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna* in West Africa

Pays / Country	Localité / Locality	Date	Nombre/ Number	Référence / Reference
Mauritanie	Banc d'Arguin (Cap Timiris)*	25-27 nov 1973	1	Gee (1984), Mahé (1985) <i>in Isenmann (s.d. [2006])</i>
	Nouakchott	25 nov (année ?)	1?	Lamarche (1988)
	Nouadhibou	7 déc 1980	1	Mahé (1985) <i>in Isenmann (s.d. [2006])</i>
	Delta du Sénégal (Chott Boul)	25 déc 1995	3	Yésou <i>et al.</i> (1996)
	Delta du Sénégal (Chott Boul)	nov-déc 1998	17	M. Benmergui <i>in litt.</i> (2008)
	Delta du Sénégal (Chott Boul)	13 jan 1999	42	M. Benmergui <i>in litt.</i> (2008)
	Delta du Sénégal (Toubous)	13 jan 1999	6	M. Benmergui <i>in litt.</i> (2008)
	Banc d'Arguin (Cap Tafarit)	7 jan 2000	1	Hagemeijer <i>et al.</i> (2000)
	Akmakam	avril 2003	1?"	Salewski <i>et al.</i> (2005)
	50 km au sud de Nouakchott	18 oct 2003	8	Swiss Ornithological Institute <i>in litt.</i> (2008)
	Banc d'Arguin (île Nair)	27 nov 2005	21	R. Cruse <i>in Bull. ABC</i> 13: 104 (2006)
	Banc d'Arguin	jan 2006	20	Isenmann (s.d. [2006])
	Aftout es Saheli	jan 2007	10	M. Benmergui <i>in litt.</i> (2008)
	Delta du Sénégal	27 déc 1973	7	Morel & Morel (1990)
Sénégal	PN des Oiseaux du Djoudj	21 jan 1974	2	Morel & Morel (1990)
	PN des Oiseaux du Djoudj	jan 1996	15	Yésou <i>et al.</i> (1996)
	PN des Oiseaux du Djoudj	jan 1997	1	Triplet <i>et al.</i> (1997)
	Siné-Saloum	jan 1997	2	Dodman <i>et al.</i> (1997)
	Lac Débo	26 déc 1993	1	van der Kamp (1994)
Mali	Kakagnan	19 déc 1998	3	van der Kamp & Diallo (1999)
	Delta du Niger	20 jan 2006	6	Girard (2006)
	35 km sud-ouest d'Agadès	3 fév 1982	1	Lunais (1983)
Niger	35 km sud-ouest d'Agadès	24 jan 1994	1	J. Brouwer <i>in litt.</i> (2008)
	Mare d'Akadané	20 fév 2000	6	A. Malam Issa <i>in litt.</i> (2008)
Guinée	Khoni Benki, Boffa	23 jan 2006	5	M. Condé <i>et al.</i> <i>in Bull. ABC</i> 13: 224 (2006)
	Weija	8 & 10 jan 1986	2	Grimes (1987)
	Sakumo lagoon	1986	2	Grimes (1987)
	Songor lagoon	11 jan 2000	1	T. Dodman & M.S. Diop comm. pers.

\* Lamarche (1988) mentionne également la date du 6 décembre, sans année ni détails, pour le Cap Timiris, mais cette donnée n'est pas reprise par Isenmann s.d. [2006], ni, compte tenu du manque de précision, dans cet article.

\*\* Plumes trouvées.

**Guinée.**—La seule donnée concerne cinq oiseaux vus le 23 janvier 2006 sur les vasières de Khoni Benki, près de Boffa, et dont deux individus sont photographiés par R. Felix (M. Condé *et al.* in *Bull. ABC* 13 : 224).

Actuellement, des tadornes ont donc été observés dans six pays d'Afrique de l'Ouest. La majorité des données proviennent de Mauritanie où l'espèce a été notée treize fois pour un total d'au moins 132 oiseaux. Viennent ensuite le Sénégal (cinq données, 27 individus), le Mali (trois données, dix individus), le Niger (trois données, huit individus), le Ghana (trois données, cinq individus) et la Guinée (une donnée, cinq individus).

Les observations les plus précoces ont été réalisées mi-octobre et les plus tardives fin février, la donnée d'avril, se rapportant à une plumée, ne pouvant augurer de la date de présence de l'oiseau. La majorité des données proviennent de janvier (14 données pour 114 individus). Sans doute peut-on y voir, à la période des dénombrements internationaux, le résultat d'une pression d'observation beaucoup plus importante que durant les autres mois.

Enfin, il est à noter que les quatorze premières données ont été collectées durant les 25 premières années (de 1973/74 à 1997/98) et ont concernées au moins 40 individus alors que les quatorze dernières observations ont été réalisées au cours des neuf dernières saisons (1998/99–2006/07) et concernent 147 individus. Là aussi peut-on y voir le résultat de la pression d'observation accrue ces dernières années ainsi que, sans doute, le résultat de l'augmentation des effectifs nicheurs européens observée entre 1974 et 2002 (Hagemeijer & Blair 1997, Wetlands International 2006).

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dans la base de données de Wetlands International. Enfin je n'oublie pas, pour leurs critiques constructives et les renseignements inédits qu'ils m'ont communiqués, Peter Browne, Ron Demey, Paul Isenmann et Jan van der Kamp.

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Pendant-winged Nightjar

# A survey of birds in Omo Forest Reserve, south-western Nigeria

Fábio Olmos<sup>a</sup> and Longtong G. Turshak<sup>b</sup>

**Un inventaire des oiseaux de la Forêt classée d’Omo, Nigeria du sud-ouest.** Lors d'un inventaire ornithologique de la Forêt classée d’Omo, Ogun State, Nigeria, en septembre 2007, 154 espèces ont été recensées, parmi lesquelles 21 sont nouvelles pour le site. Ceci porte le nombre total d'espèces connues de cette forêt à 242. En dépit d'avoir beaucoup souffert de la déforestation et du braconage, et malgré le fait qu'une grande partie a été convertie en plantations et cultures, le site, qui est une des 27 Zones d'Importance pour la Conservation des Oiseaux (ZICO) du Nigeria, héberge encore un nombre significatif d'espèces endémiques à la forêt guinéo-congolaise, ainsi qu'au moins deux espèces cataloguées comme Quasi menacées, le Perroquet jaco *Psittacus erithacus* et le Calao à casque jaune *Ceratogymna elata*.

**Summary.** A survey conducted at Omo Forest Reserve, Ogun State, Nigeria, in September 2007, found 154 bird species, of which 21 were new to the area, which is now known to harbour at least 242 species. Although impacted by a long history of logging and hunting, and despite a large area having been converted to plantations and farms, the reserve, which is one of Nigeria's 27 Important Bird Areas (IBA), still harbours a significant number of Guineo-Congolian forest endemics and at least two globally Near-Threatened species, Grey Parrot *Psittacus erithacus* and Yellow-casqued Hornbill *Ceratogymna elata*.

The rain forests of south-western Nigeria, close to the Dahomey Gap, are geographically intermediate between the Upper Guinea forests that formerly extended from Sierra Leone to the Ghana-Togo border, and the Guineo-Congolian (or Gulf of Guinea) forests reaching eastern Nigeria (White 1983, Kingdon 1989, Oates *et al.* 2004). South-west Nigeria is considered a 'secondary endemic bird area' defined by the distribution of the range-restricted Ibadan Malimbe *Malimbus ibadanensis* (Stattersfield *et al.* 1998).

With the rapid increase in human population, from c.38 million in 1960 to 140 million in 2006, the forests in the south-west, close to the densely populated cities of Lagos and Benin City, have undergone intense pressure from logging and agriculture. In 2005 Nigeria was considered to be the country with the worst global deforestation rate, at 11.1% per year in 2000–05. Over 95% of Nigeria's forests have been lost, and the remainder are severely threatened (FAO 2005).

The Western Ondo Forest (Toham *et al.* 2006) comprises a cluster of contiguous forest reserves in eastern Ogun, western Ondo and southern Osun States, namely Omo, Oluwa, Shasha, Ife and Ago-Owu Forest Reserves. The largest of these are Omo (1,305 km<sup>2</sup>), Oluwa (828 km<sup>2</sup>) and Shasha

(c.300 km<sup>2</sup>). These three reserves formed part of the Shasha Forest Reserve, originally created in 1925 (Isichei 1995).

Forest reserves in Nigeria were established during the colonial period to provide sustainable supplies of timber through controlled logging and to safeguard water supplies. Logging was undertaken according to rotational timber-harvesting plans, but this sustained-yield management was largely abandoned during the 1970s. In some reserves, natural vegetation has been replaced with monocultures of exotic trees. Harvesting of natural resources and settling is allowed under permit or through special concessions. Bad management and lack of enforcement often results in uncontrolled harvesting and deforestation. Only a few reserves, in remote or sparsely populated areas, are still in good condition (Ezealor 2001).

During the 1980s c.40% of Omo Forest Reserve (FR) was converted to plantations of the fast-growing *Gmelina arborea* tree as part of the Ogun State Forestry Plantation Project, funded by the World Bank and the African Development Bank (Isichei 1995, Green *et al.* 2007). The plantations were planned to provide pulp for a mill at Iwopin, but the mill was never completed and the trees are now harvested mostly for timber.

The oldest current settlements in Omo are reported to date from the 1950s. Initially these were temporary and, due to access difficulties and the dense forest, considered unfavourable for permanent residence. By opening roads and providing jobs, the forestry project caused an influx of outsiders into the area, who started cultivating plots of their own, causing both further deforestation and unrest among local communities (Ikehme 2007).

Human settlements in and around the reserve numbered over 20,000 people in 1997 (Greengrass 1997). These populations placed severe pressure on remaining forest by clearing new farms and hunting. The forests in Omo are now severely fragmented, with a patchwork of plots of plantain, banana, cocoa and other crops amid remaining logged forest dissected by roads and trails. The villages also put great pressure on the local fauna: an estimated 32,812 animals were taken from the reserve as bushmeat in 1994 (Ezealor 2001). Omo thus repeats a pattern seen elsewhere within protected and 'sustainable use' areas in the Gulf of Guinea forests (Oates *et al.* 2004).

Despite its adverse prospects, Omo has received conservation attention. It has a 4.6 km<sup>2</sup> Strict Nature Reserve (locally known as 'Queen Elizabeth Farm'), established in 1946. UNESCO declared this a Biosphere Reserve in 1977. In the early 1990s, the Nigeria Elephant Group and Ogun State Government created a 142 km<sup>2</sup> Biosphere Extension Area around the Strict Nature Reserve, theoretically protected from logging.

Omo FR has been considered an Important Bird Area (NG008), with at least 74 bird species restricted to the Guinea-Congo Forests biome (Ezealor 2001). Bird surveys in the area were conducted in the mid 1990s (Weeks 1997, *in Ezealor 2001*), and more systematically in 2000 (Green *et al.* 2007).

Here we report the results of a bird survey conducted in September 2007 in Omo FR as part of the project 'Survey of Omo-Oluwa-Shasha Forest Complex, South-western Nigeria', undertaken by the Nigerian Conservation Foundation with the goal of assessing the distribution and status of natural forest and key wildlife populations in Omo-Oluwa-Shasha, and to make preliminary recommendations for conservation. One specific goal of the bird survey was to assess the possible

presence of Ibadan Malimbe *Malimbus ibadanensis*, a threatened Nigerian endemic.

## Study area

Omo FR was created in 1916 and was one of the first forests in Nigeria to be logged, beginning in the 1920s. It is located 135 km north-east of Lagos and 20 km from the coast. The Omo River flows through the centre of the reserve. One western tributary is the Erijah, a fast-flowing river running over exposed boulders. Some creeks are reported to cease flowing during the dry season, including those closer to Erin Camp (see below).

Average rainfall in the region is 1,800–2,000 mm, with a dry season from November to March. It rained almost daily during our stay, with frequent downpours. The terrain is undulating, with elevation mostly between 60 and 220 m, reaching c.300 m on some hilltops. The areas south of the reserve are at lower elevations than those to the north. The region lies on crystalline basements of granite, gneiss and schist, overlain to the south with Eocene deposits of sand, gravel and clay (Ischei 1995).

The vegetation is semi-evergreen forest, almost all second growth or otherwise disturbed by logging, with pockets of older forest where timber extraction was difficult (Ezealor 2001). In logged areas vine tangles and the second-growth tree *Musanga cecropioides* are common, but oil-palms *Elaeis guineensis* are uncommon, especially compared to sites further west along the road to Lagos. Most remaining larger trees are the soft-wooded *Ceiba pentandra* (Bombacaceae). There are also low-lying areas along drainage lines covered by tangled vegetation with few trees where access is difficult.

Omo FR is reached from the main road between Lagos and Benin City via a dirt road leading to J-4 Town (06°49'51"N 04°22'20"E; 81 m), the reserve's headquarters, where a sawmill has operated since the 1940s. From J-4 Town, one road crosses the Omo River at the Bailey bridge (06°52'53"N 04°19'55"E; 82 m), passes Eseke Village (06°54'55"N 04°19'55"E; 77 m) and reaches the access trail leading to Erin Camp (06°55'06"N 04°19'10"E; 92 m), first established as a research base by the Nigerian Forest Elephant Group (NFIG) in 1993 (for a map, see Green *et al.* 2007). The camp is located in the heart of the Biosphere Extension Area and logging has

been less intensive around it than elsewhere in the reserve, although some areas have seen some undergrowth clearance as a first step to establishing farms. The immediate vicinity has seemingly good forest with some of the tallest trees we ever found in the area.

## Methods

We stayed in Omo FR during 30 August–1 September, 5–17 and 20–29 September 2007. We undertook recce walks (White & Edwards 2000) mostly along the trail system around Erin Camp, including the 'Nature Trail' and old logging roads leading to the Erijah River and several farms beside it (at c.06°55'23"N 04°18'06"E; 70 m), 2.5 km in a straight line from the camp. We also walked the main road beyond Eseke to the Bailey bridge and in the opposite direction past Sodokurodu village (06°57'60"N 04°19'08"E), bisecting a mosaic of farmland and secondary forest. Thus we covered all of the representative forested areas of the reserve. Most of the accessible areas further away have been heavily logged or cultivated (R. Ikemeh pers. comm.). As we opted to concentrate our effort in forest habitat, limited observations were made in degraded areas and wetlands around J-4

Town, which were more thoroughly explored by Green *et al.* (2007).

Censuses were conducted mostly during the morning, starting soon after sunrise to c.11.00 hrs, along existing trails. Less systematic walks were made in the afternoon, mostly along the 'Nature Trail' near the camp and its access trail. Tape-recording of bird vocalisations and playback were also used, mostly for species considered threatened or to check identifications. We used Chappuis (2001) as a sound reference to compare recordings and also for playback.

## Results and Discussion

We recorded 154 species, not including a few seen only along the Benin City–Lagos road (Pied Crow *Corvus albus*, Hooded Vulture *Necrosyrtes monachus*, Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*). We did not obtain a copy of Weeks' unpublished bird list, so we computed only the subset of 74 range-restricted species listed in Ezealor (2001), who mentions, but does not list in all, 147 species for the reserve. The species considered 'additions' below are therefore not listed either by those sources or Green *et al.* (2007). Green *et al.* (2007) list 210 species, whilst Ezealor (2001) lists 11 species not found by them, of which we recorded nine. The 21 additions made during our survey indicate that Omo Forest Reserve harbours at least 242 bird species (Appendix 1).

At least 46 waterbirds (herons, rails, shorebirds and kingfishers) not particularly dependent on forest were recorded. At least another 43 species are birds of prey, swifts, swallows, pipits, weavers and seedeaters more associated with open areas than forest habitats, many using roads and cultivated areas to colonise sites deep within the reserve.

Although the forest avifauna of Omo FR is dominated by Guineo-Congolian taxa, it includes several Upper Guinea forms that reach east of the Dahomey Gap, such as Yellow-billed Barbet *Trachyphonus purpuratus togoensis*, Hairy-breasted Barbet *Tricholaema hirsuta hirsuta*, Red-tailed Greenbul *Criniger calurus verreauxii* and Vieillot's Black Weaver *Ploceus nigerrimus castaneofuscus*.

No positive evidence of Ibadan Malimbe *Malimbus ibadanensis* was found; a few possible sightings were inconclusive. The forest at Omo appears structurally different from those around Ibadan (with fewer palms, for example), and the rainfall regime is different, but it is

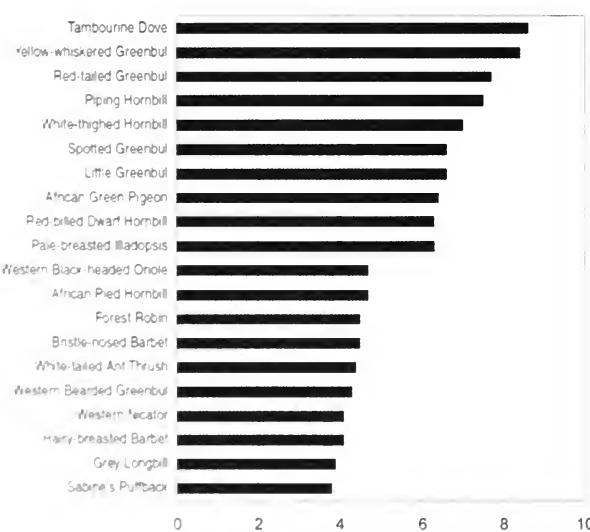


Figure 1. The 20 species with the highest detection rates (in individuals / 10 hours) in Omo Forest Reserve, September 2007.

Les 20 espèces avec le taux de détection le plus élevé (individus / 10 heures) dans la Forêt classée d'Omo, septembre 2007.



**Figure 2.** (a) Male White-thighed Hornbill *Bycanistes albocapillus*; (b) female Yellow-casqued Hornbill *Ceratogymna elata*; (c) Black Dwarf Hornbill *Tockus hartlaubi*; (d) Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus bilineatus*; (e) Red-billed Dwarf Hornbill *Tockus camurus*; (f) African Pygmy Kingfisher *Ceyx pictus* (Fábio Olmos)

(a) Calao à cuisses blanches *Bycanistes albocapillus* mâle ;  
 (b) Calao à casque jaune *Ceratogymna elata* femelle ;  
 (c) Calao de Hartlaub *Tockus hartlaubi* ; (d) Barbion à croupion jaune *Pogoniulus bilineatus* ; (e) Calao pygmée *Tockus camurus* ; (f) Martin-pêcheur pygmée *Ceyx pictus* (Fábio Olmos)

nevertheless difficult to understand why this seemingly forest-edge species does not occur at Omo, especially given the possible records (still undocumented) from sites east and west of Omo (Fry *et al.* 2004).

Vocal activity was limited during our survey and most species were not strongly responsive to playback, as the main breeding season had drawn to a close. It is probable that more species will be added to the list with greater sampling effort and broader coverage, especially if more undisturbed areas in the reserve can be identified.

The species most easily detected (Fig. 1) were either those with conspicuous voices (pigeons, some greenbuls, Pale-breasted Illadopsis *Illadopsis rufipennis*, Forest Robin *Stiphronis erythrothorax*) or conspicuous when flying in flocks (hornbills). Two of the 20 more conspicuous species (Bristle-nosed Barbet *Gymnobucco peli* and Finsch's Flycatcher Thrush *Stizorhina finschi*) are additions to the reserve's list.

Mixed-species flocks were fairly common and mostly included Spotted Greenbul *Ixonotus guttatus*, Icterine Greenbul *Phyllastrephus icterinus*, Western Bearded Greenbul *Criniger barbatus*, Western Nicator *Nicator chloris*, drongos *Dicrurus* spp., Bristle-nosed Barbet, Naked-faced Barbet *Gymnobucco calvus*, Red-billed Dwarf Hornbill *Tockus camurus*, Vieillot's Black Weaver and Blue-billed Malimbe *Malimbus nitens*. Army ant swarms were seen to be attended by Fire-crested Alethe *Alethe castanea*, Grey-headed Bristlebill *Bleda canicapillus* and Red-tailed Bristlebill *B. syndactylus*.

Abundant mistletoes were flowering and attracted many sunbirds, sometimes in loose flocks. One flock, at Erin Camp, included Collared *Hedydipna collaris*, Bates's *Cinnyris batesi*, Olive-bellied *C. chloropygius*, Buff-throated *Chalcomitra adelberti* and Little Green Sunbirds *Anthreptes seimundi*.

#### Notes on selected species

Additions to the reserve's avifaunal list are denoted (+). Status and distribution in Nigeria from Elgood *et al.* (1994) is mentioned between square parentheses.

**Congo Serpent Eagle** *Dryotriorchis spectabilis* (+)  
One soaring near Eseke on 14 September; another flying past Erin Camp carrying a whip snake in

the late afternoon of 20 September. The following day one was calling early in the morning near camp and attracted with playback. Also heard near Eseke on 27 September. The birds had well-marked underparts, like the nominate, Upper Guinea, form. [Recorded from Cross River, Ondo, Sapoba, Ife and Gambari.]

**Long-crested Eagle** *Lophaetus occipitalis* (+)  
One soaring high over farm and forest mosaic near the bridge on 26 September.

#### Fraser's Eagle Owl *Bubo poensis*

One mobbed by a mixed flock of Icterine and other greenbuls, and Pied Hornbills *Tockus fasciatus* by the creek near camp on 11 September; a similar scene, with c.10 Pied Hornbills, was witnessed at almost the same spot on 24 September. [Found from Bonny to Ibadan; considered uncommon.]

#### Black Spinetail *Telacanthura melanopygia* (+)

At least four large, all-dark chocolate-brown swifts with square tails flying over J-4 Town on 5 September. The powerful flight and jizz were quite similar to the large Neotropical *Streptoprocne* spp. [Patchily distributed, although likely to be overlooked, in southern Nigeria.]

#### African Dwarf Kingfisher *Ceyx lecontei*

One seen in the lower canopy over the main trail to Erin Camp on 12 September. Probably under-recorded. [Rare or very local resident recorded at Benin City, Sapele, Ife, Okomu, Oban and Ibadan.]

#### Black Dwarf Hornbill *Tockus hartlaubi*

One was seen calling by the J-4 road on 26 September. Listed for Omo by Ezealor (2001). Uncommon resident in tall forest across the country and the rarest, or the least conspicuous, hornbill in the area. [Uncommon resident in tall forest across the country.]

#### Yellow-casqued Hornbill *Ceratogymna elata*

A female with a resting flock of White-thighed Hornbills *Bycanistes albotibialis* and Black-and-white-casqued Hornbills *B. subcylindricus* along the Nature Trail on 8 September; a pair resting in an emergent tree along the same trail on 15 September; a female in flight with Pied and

White-thighed Hornbills near Erin Camp on 27 September. All records could refer to the same birds. [Rare resident of the high forest zone, especially from Benin eastwards.]

**Bristle-nosed Barbet** *Gymnobucco peli* (+)

Recorded alone or in small groups between Erin Camp and Eseke. A mixed colony with Naked-faced Barbets was active in a large dead tree near the intersection of the J-4 road and the trail to Erin Camp. [Less common than *G. calvus*; not recently recorded from the Lagos area.]

**Greater Honeyguide** *Indicator indicator* (+)

A female in a tree by the J-4 road on 8 September. An open-habitat species that is perhaps colonising formerly forested areas in the wake of deforestation.

**Brown-eared Woodpecker** *Campetherina caroli*

A female foraging on a thick liana at forest edge near Eseke on 11 September; a male in the lower strata along the trail to the camp on 22 September. [Rare; recorded in forest from near Benin and Okomu.]

**Gabon Woodpecker** *Dendropicos gabonensis* (+)

One photographed at forest edge by the J-4 road on 14 September; another by Erin Camp on 23 September. A pair foraging high in *Musanga* trees by the J-4 road on 24 September. [Uncommon resident, usually in secondary forest, from Lagos to Calabar.]

**Little Grey Greenbul** *Andropadus gracilis* (+)

A small greenbul with yellowish-olive underparts (lacking in *A. ansorgei*), narrow white eye-ring and olive-grey head and throat identified as this species was seen several times around Erin Camp and along the trail to Eseke. On 15 September, one was foraging in the mid canopy with a flock of Golden Greenbuls *Calyptocichla serina* and Red-tailed Greenbuls in forest along the Nature Trail. On 24 September, along Shasha trail, a similar bird was attending an open-cup nest located 7 m high on a tree, presumably incubating as it remained in the nest when approached to 2 m. [Recorded in Cross River State, Ondo State, Sapoba, Ife and Gambari.]

**Ansorge's Greenbul** *Andropadus ansorgei*

A few heard on 26–27 September between Eseke and the bridge and Erin Camp. Probably overlooked and is more broadly distributed west of the Niger than currently thought. Listed for Omo by Ezealor (2001). [Status unclear, probably not uncommon resident, known from east of lower Niger and westwards at Sapoba.]

**Golden Greenbul** *Calyptocichla serina* (+)

Recorded foraging alone or in pairs in the lower canopy, sometimes in mixed flocks with other greenbuls and barbets. Identification based on relative size, bright yellow belly and pinkish bill. [Noted from Umuagwu, Gambari, Akure and Calabar.]

**Simple Leaflove** *Chlorocichla simplex* (+)

Heard at forest edge and in second-growth around Eseke village on 11 September; one seen at the intersection between the J-4 road and the camp's trail on 22 September. [Common resident of second growth, gardens, etc., in forest and derived savanna across the country.]

**Leaflove** *Pyrrhurus scandens* (+)

One by a creek en route to Sodokurodu on 23 September; another consuming a large green caterpillar in the canopy of a large fig tree by the bridge on 26 September. [Uncommon and local resident in gallery forest and, sometimes, forest edge from Lekki Peninsula and Sapele north to Kainji, Zaria and Kagoro, also Obudu Plateau and Gashaka-Gumti National Park.]

**Finsch's Flycatcher Thrush** *Stizorhina finschi* (+)

One or two heard daily in early morning around Erin Camp; also seen along the Nature Trail and J-4 road between Eseke and the bridge. The birds sounded very much like the recordings of Fraser's Flycatcher Thrush *S. Fraseri* on Chappuis (2000) but all had white outer tails typical of *S. finschi*. [Not uncommon resident in forest from Lagos to Owerri. The similar *S. Fraseri* is known only from Oban Hills.]

**Red-faced Cisticola** *Cisticola erythrops* (+)

Heard in grassy areas around J-4 Town on 20 September. [Common in rank grass from Lagos to Calabar.]



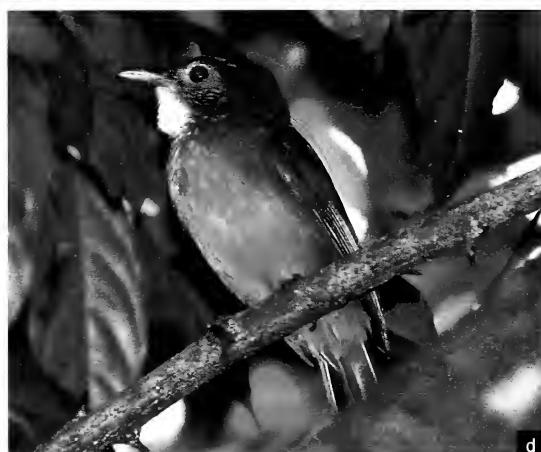
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Figure 3. (a) Bulbul tounié *Bleda canicapillus*; (b) Grey headed Bristlebill *Bleda canicapillus*; (c) Red-tailed Greenbul *Coccyzus erythrophthalmus*; (d) Plain-tailed Greenbul *Coccyzus calurus*; (e) Western Bearded Greenbul *Cinnyris barbatus*; (f) Yellow-billed Babbler *Turdoides poliocephala*. (Photo: Olmos)

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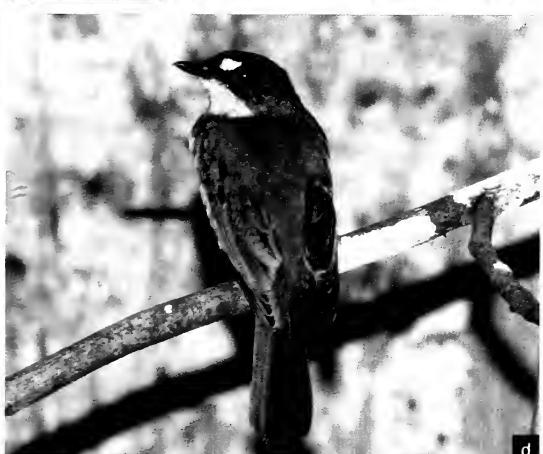
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**Figure 4.** (a) Fire-crested Alethe *Alethe (diademata) castanea*; (b) Blue Cuckooshrike *Coracina azurea*; (c) Pale-breasted Illadopsis *Illadopsis rufipennis*; (d) White-browed Forest Flycatcher *Fraseria cinerascens*; (e) Little Green Sunbird *Anthreptes seimundi*; (f) Buff-throated Sunbird *Chalcomitra adelberti* (Fábio Olmos)

(a) Alète à couronne orangée *Alethe (diademata) castanea* ; (b) Échenilleur bleu *Coracina azurea* ; (c) Akalat à poitrine blanche *Illadopsis rufipennis* ; (d) Gobemouche à sourcils blancs *Fraseria cinerascens* ; (e) Souimanga de Seimund *Anthreptes seimundi* ; (f) Souimanga à gorge rousse *Chalcomitra adelberti* (Fábio Olmos)

### **Kemp's Longbill** *Macrocephalus kempfi* (+)

Commonly heard in vine tangles around Erin Camp and along the trails to Erijah. [Not uncommon resident in forest in the south-west from Lagos to Ife, and probably to the lower Niger.]

### **Sooty Flycatcher** *Muscicapa infuscata* (+)

A pair of this drab, unmarked flycatcher was perched atop a dead snag by the Bailey bridge on 16 September; a single with Collared *Hedydipna collaris* and Buff-throated Sunbirds *Chalcomitra adelberti* at forest edge near the bridge on 27 September. [Uncommon resident, but locally not uncommon, in lowland mature forest from Gambari to Calabar, usually near the coast.]

### **Shrike Flycatcher** *Megabyas flammulatus* (+)

A male atop a dead snag in farmland near the Erijah River on 11 September. [Uncommon resident in forest canopy, mostly west of the Niger, occasionally to Ibadan and the southern scarp of Jos Plateau and Kagoro.]

### **Yellow-bellied Wattle-eye** *Dyaphorophyia concreta* (+)

A pair with at least one young foraging in the canopy along the trail from the J-4 road to Erin Camp on 13 September. The birds had vivid yellow underparts, including the throat, typical of the subspecies *graueri*. Listed by BoA as occurring in south-east Nigeria east of the Niger from Umuagwu to Calabar and Oban, and also the south-west of the Obudu escarpment (Urban *et al.* 1997). [Very few records; known from two sightings in the Calabar area, two on the southern scarp of Obudu Plateau, and from Oban West.]

### **Little Green Sunbird** *Anthreptes seimundi* (+)

This confusing, warbler-like small sunbird was commonly seen in pairs or small groups associated with mixed-species flocks foraging in the lower canopy and mid-strata. A pair was mobbing a snake that eventually entered their purse-shaped nest c.4 m high on a fairly isolated tree by the road at Eseke on 28 September. [Uncommon (or overlooked), with records in rain forest belt from Ipake and Lagos to Umuagwu and Oban.]

### **Square-tailed Drongo** *Dicrurus ludwigii* (+)

Smaller drongos with tails lacking obvious notches and a purple-blue sheen were assigned to this

species. Singles and pairs associated with mixed-species flocks of greenbuls and barbets. [Resident from the coastal zone (Lagos) to gallery forest and inselbergs of Guinea savannah zone.]

### **Many-coloured Bushshrike** *Malaconotus multicolor* (+)

A pair, calling while foraging in vine tangles in the lower canopy by the J-4 road, observed at length on 17 September; two birds heard near Sodokurodu on 23 September. [Uncommon resident in tall forest from Ilaro to Ife and Ikom; also seen at Kagoro and in Gashaka-Gumti National Park.]

### **Forest Chestnut-winged Starling** *Onychognathus fulgidus* (+)

A pair atop dead trees by the camp on 10 September, the long-tailed profile and the wing patches were conspicuous in flight. [Common and widespread in forest clearings and edges from the coast north to Ibadan.]

### **White-breasted Negrofinch** *Nigrita fusconotus* (+)

A pair foraging low on trees at forest edge near Eseke on 12 September showed the contrasting white belly, black head and brown upperparts. [Uncommon resident in less-disturbed lowland forest, west of the Niger from the coast north to Ife and Akure.]

### **Conservation**

Logging is ongoing and has damaged most of the reserve. Large areas are heavily disturbed and covered by lianas which, even in the absence of further disturbance, will make forest regeneration very slow. The intensity of the activity and the large number of logging roads have damaged the forest structure and undoubtedly affected more sensitive species.

Human population and activity in the reserve is increasing. We came across several recently cleared areas where plantains and other crops were being planted. Some were by the J-4 road (e.g. near Sodokurodu) and were easily detected. Control is slight or non-existent. Once we met a man who claimed to be a forest guard of the state's Forestry Department and claimed that he had come to Eseke to investigate our work. He informed us that hunting is forbidden in the

reserve; shortly thereafter we came across a hunter and we heard at least two gun shots every day (and up to seven in one particularly busy night). As already noted by previous workers (Ezealor 2001), hunting pressure is very high. Hunters were met occasionally, even in the immediate vicinity of Erin Camp—a supposedly strictly protected area—and the casual collection of spent cartridges along the trails yielded 26 12-gauge shells by the end of our stay. Although mammals are the main targets, larger birds are also taken, thereby explaining the absence of Crested Guineafowl *Guttera pucherani* (reported to be common by Green *et al.* 2007) during our visit and the few records of Great Blue Turaco *Corythaeola cristata*, Latham's Forest Francolin *Francolinus lathami* and casqued hornbills *Ceratogymna* spp.

Grey Parrot *Psittacus erithacus*, a harvested Near-Threatened species, has undergone a dramatic decline: we recorded just one pair and a single, whereas flocks of hundreds were reported in the 1990s (Green *et al.* 2007).

The villagers at Eseke stated that they were glad that elephants, buffaloes and chimpanzees which could damage their crops are no longer, or only rarely, found. Balancing effective wildlife conservation and the permanence of settlements in the area is therefore an unlikely goal without stronger law enforcement and economic incentives for the local people. If logging and further clearance can be halted, the patchwork of forest and farmland might permit regeneration of most areas within a few decades. Populations of important species, like long-lived larger hornbills, might also recover if hunting bans are enforced.

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## Appendix 1. Bird species recorded at Omo Forest Reserve, Nigeria.

Species marked with a (\*) are additions to the overall bird list made during this study; \* indicates species seen along the Lagos–Benin road and likely to occur in more open areas in Omo. Numbers in the column 'this study' refer to the number of individuals detected per ten hours of censuses; 'x' indicates species recorded off-census. Ezealor (2001) listed Guineo-Congolian endemics only. Sequence follows Borrow & Demey (2001).

## Annexe 1. Espèces d'oiseaux recensées dans la Forêt classée d'Omo, Nigeria.

Les espèces indiquées par (\*) ont été ajoutées à la liste pendant la présente étude; un astérisque \* indique les espèces observées le long de la route Lagos–Benin qui se trouvent probablement également dans les zones les plus ouvertes d'Omo. Les chiffres dans la colonne 'this study' (= cette étude) indiquent le nombre d'individus observées

par 10 heures de recensements ; 'x' indique les espèces observées en dehors des recensements. Ezealor (2001) ne mentionne que les endémiques guinéo-congolais. L'ordre des espèces suit Borrow & Demey (2001).

		Ezealor (2001)	Green et al. (2007)	This study
<b>Podicipedidae</b>				
<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	Little Grebe		x	
<b>Ardeidae</b>				
<i>Ixobrychus sturmii</i>	Dwarf Bittern	x		
<i>Bubulcus ibis*</i>	Cattle Egret	x		
<i>Butorides striata</i>	Green-backed Heron	x		
<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	Little Egret	x		
<i>Egretta alba</i>	Great Egret	x		
<i>Ardea purpurea</i>	Purple Heron	x		
<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	Grey Heron	x	0.2	
<b>Threskiornithidae</b>				
<i>Bostockia hagedash</i>	Hadada Ibis	x	1.6	
<b>Anatidae</b>				
<i>Pteronetta hartlaubii</i>	Hartlaub's Duck	x		
<b>Accipitridae</b>				
<i>Pernis apivorus</i>	European Honey Buzzard	x	0.2	
<i>Macheiramphus alcinus</i>	Bat Hawk	x		
<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>	Black-shouldered Kite	x		
<i>Milvus migrans</i>	Black Kite	x	x	
<i>Gypohierax angolensis</i>	Palm-nut Vulture	x	x	
<i>Necrosyrtes monachus*</i>	Hooded Vulture	x		
<i>Polyboroides typus</i>	African Harrier Hawk	x	0.4	
<i>Accipiter tachiro</i>	African Goshawk	x		
<i>Urotriorchis macrourus</i>	Long-tailed Hawk	x	x	
<i>Kaupifalco monogrammicus</i>	Lizard Buzzard	x	x	
<i>Buteo auguralis</i>	Red-necked Buzzard	x		
<i>Dryotriorchis spectabilis+</i>	Congo Serpent Eagle		0.4	
<i>Aquila rapax</i>	Tawny Eagle	x		
<i>Hieraetus ayresii</i>	Ayres's Hawk Eagle	x		
<i>Lophaetus occipitalis+</i>	Long-crested Eagle		x	
<i>Stephanoaetus coronatus</i>	Crowned Eagle	x	x	
<b>Falconidae</b>				
<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	Common Kestrel	x	x	
<i>Falco biarmicus</i>	Lanner Falcon	x		
<b>Phasianidae</b>				
<i>Francolinus lathami</i>	Latham's Forest Francolin	x	x	0.2
<i>Francolinus bicalcaratus</i>	Double-spurred Francolin	x	x	
<b>Numididae</b>				
<i>Guttera pucherani</i>	Crested Guineafowl		x	
<b>Rallidae</b>				
<i>Himantornis haematopus</i>	Nkulengu Rail	x	x	0.4
<i>Canarallus ocaleus</i>	Grey-throated Rail	x		
<i>Sarothrura pulchra</i>	White-spotted Flufftail	x	x	2.0
<i>Crex egregia</i>	African Crake	x		
<i>Amuromis flavirostris</i>	Black Crake	x		
<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	Common Moorhen	x		
<b>Helminthidae</b>				
<i>Podica senegalensis</i>	African Finfoot	x		
<b>Jacanidae</b>				
<i>Actophilornis africana</i>	African Jacana	x	x	
<b>Recurvirostridae</b>				
<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	Black-winged Stilt	x		
<b>Charadriidae</b>				
<i>Charadrius forbesi</i>	Forbes's Plover	x		
<i>Vanellus albiceps</i>	White-headed Lapwing	x		

		Eealor (2001)	Green et al. (2007)	This study		Eealor (2001)	Green et al. (2007)	This study
<b>Scolopacidae</b>					<b>Coraciidae</b>			
<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	Common Snipe	x			<i>Eurystomus gularis</i>	Blue-throated Roller	x	x
<i>Tringa erythropus</i>	Spotted Redshank	x			<i>Eurystomus glaucurus</i>	Broad-billed Roller	x	x
<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	Common Greenshank	x			<b>Phoeniculidae</b>			
<i>Tringa ochropus</i>	Green Sandpiper	x			<i>Phoeniculus castaneiceps</i>	Forest Wood-hoopoe	x	x
<i>Tringa glareola</i>	Wood Sandpiper	x			<b>Bucerotidae</b>			
<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	Common Sandpiper	x	x		<i>Tropicranus albocristatus</i>	White-crested Hornbill	x	x
<b>Columbidae</b>					<i>Tockus hartlaubi</i>	Black-billed Dwarf Hornbill	x	0.4
<i>Treron calvus</i>	African Green Pigeon	x	6.4		<i>Tockus camurus</i>	Red-billed Dwarf Hornbill	x	6.3
<i>Turtur brehmmeri</i>	Blue-headed Wood Dove	x	x		<i>Tockus fasciatus</i>	African Pied Hornbill	x	4.7
<i>Turtur tympanistria</i>	Tambourine Dove	x	8.6		<i>Bycanistes fistulator</i>	Piping Hornbill	x	7.5
<i>Turtur afer</i>	Blue-spotted Wood Dove	x	1.8		<i>Bycanistes cylindricus</i>	Black-and-white-casqued Hornbill	x	0.5
<i>Streptopelia semitorquata</i>	Red-eyed Dove	x	x		<i>Bycanistes albotibialis</i>	White-thighed Hornbill	x	7.0
<b>Psittacidae</b>					<i>Ceratogymna elata</i>	Yellow-casqued Hornbill	x	x
<i>Psittacus erithacus</i>	Grey Parrot	x	x	0.4	<i>Ceratogymna atrata</i>	Black-casqued Hornbill	x	2.0
<b>Musophagidae</b>					<b>Capitonidae</b>			
<i>Corythaeola cristata</i>	Great Blue Turaco	x	2.1		<i>Gymnobucco peli+</i>	Bristle-nosed Barbet		4.5
<i>Tauraco macrorhynchus</i>	Yellow-billed Turaco	x	3.2		<i>Gymnobucco calvus</i>	Naked-faced Barbet	x	2.5
<b>Cuculidae</b>					<i>Pogonius scolopaceus</i>	Speckled Tinkerbird	x	0.5
<i>Oxylophorus levaillantii</i>	Levaillant's Cuckoo	x			<i>Pogonius atroflavus</i>	Red-rumped Tinkerbird		0.9
<i>Clamator glandarius</i>	Great Spotted Cuckoo	x			<i>Pogonius sulphureus</i>	Yellow-throated Tinkerbird	x	2.5
<i>Cuculus solitarius</i>	Red-chested Cuckoo	x	2.0		<i>Pogonius bilineatus</i>	Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird	x	1.8
<i>Cuculus clamosus</i>	Black Cuckoo	x	0.2		<i>Buccanodon duchaillui</i>	Yellow-spotted Barbet	x	2.7
<i>Cuculus gularis</i>	African Cuckoo	x	0.2		<i>Tricholaema hirsuta</i>	Hairy-breasted Barbet	x	4.1
<i>Cercococcyx olivinus</i>	Olive Long-tailed Cuckoo	x			<i>Trachyphonus purpuratus</i>	Yellow-billed Barbet	x	1.4
<i>Cercococcyx mechowi</i>	Dusky Long-tailed Cuckoo	x	0.9		<b>Indicatoridae</b>			
<i>Chrysococcyx cupreus</i>	African Emerald Cuckoo	x	2.0		<i>Indicator maculatus</i>	Spotted Honeyguide	x	
<i>Chrysococcyx klaas</i>	Klaas's Cuckoo	x	1.3		<i>Indicator indicator+</i>	Greater Honeyguide		0.2
<i>Chrysococcyx caprius</i>	Didric Cuckoo	x	x		<b>Picidae</b>			
<i>Ceuthmochares aeneus</i>	Yellowbill	x	2.3		<i>Campetherina nivosa</i>	Buff-spotted Woodpecker	x	x
<i>Centropus leucogaster</i>	Black-throated Coucal	x	x		<i>Campetherina caroli</i>	Brown-eared Woodpecker	x	x
<i>Centropus senegalensis</i>	Senegal Coucal	x	0.4		<i>Dendropicos gabonensis+</i>	Gabon Woodpecker		0.4
<b>Strigidae</b>					<i>Dendropicos fuscescens</i>	Cardinal Woodpecker	x	0.2
<i>Bubo poensis</i>	Fraser's Eagle Owl	x	x		<i>Dendropicos pyrrhogaster</i>	Fire-bellied Woodpecker	x	x
<i>Scotopelia bouvieri</i>	Vermiculated Fishing Owl	x			<b>Eurylaimidae</b>			
<i>Strix woodfordii</i>	African Wood Owl	x	x		<i>Smithornis rufulateralis</i>	Rufous-sided Broadbill	x	x
<b>Caprimulgidae</b>					<b>Pittidae</b>			
<i>Caprimulgus climacurus</i>	Long-tailed Nightjar	x			<i>Pitta angolensis</i>	African Pitta		x
<b>Apodidae</b>					<b>Hirundinidae</b>			
<i>Rhaphidura sabini</i>	Sabine's Spinetail	x	x		<i>Hirundo semirufa</i>	Rufous-chested Swallow	x	
<i>Telacanthura melanopygia+</i>	Black Spinetail		x		<i>Hirundo senegalensis</i>	Mosque Swallow	x	x
<i>Neafrapus cassini</i>	Cassin's Spinetail	x	x		<i>Hirundo smithii</i>	Wire-tailed Swallow	x	
<i>Cypsiurus parvus</i>	African Palm Swift	x	x		<i>Hirundo aethiopica</i>	Ethiopian Swallow	x	x
<i>Apus apus</i>	Common Swift	x	x		<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	Barn Swallow	x	
<i>Apus affinis</i>	Little Swift	x	x		<b>Motacillidae</b>			
<b>Alcedinidae</b>					<i>Motacilla flava</i>	Yellow Wagtail	x	
<i>Halcyon badia</i>	Chocolate-backed Kingfisher	x	x	2.0	<i>Motacilla aguimp</i>	African Pied Wagtail	x	
<i>Halcyon leucocephala</i>	Grey-headed Kingfisher	x	x		<i>Anthus leucophrys</i>	Plain-backed Pipit	x	
<i>Halcyon malimbica</i>	Blue-breasted Kingfisher	x	0.9		<i>Anthus trivialis</i>	Tree Pipit	x	
<i>Halcyon senegalensis</i>	Woodland Kingfisher	x			<i>Macronyx croceus</i>	Yellow-throated Longclaw	x	
<i>Ceyx lecontei</i>	African Dwarf Kingfisher	x	x	0.2	<b>Campephagidae</b>			
<i>Ceyx pictus</i>	African Pygmy Kingfisher	x	0.5		<i>Coracina azurea</i>	Blue Cuckooshrike	x	0.5
<i>Alcedo leucogaster</i>	White-bellied Kingfisher	x	x		<b>Pycnonotidae</b>			
<i>Alcedo cristata</i>	Malachite Kingfisher	x			<i>Andropadus virens</i>	Little Greenbul	x	6.6
<i>Alcedo quadribrachys</i>	Shining-blue Kingfisher	x			<i>Andropadus gracilis+</i>	Little Grey Greenbul		1.4
<i>Megacerulea maxima</i>	Giant Kingfisher	x			<i>Andropadus ansorgei</i>	Ansorge's Greenbul	x	0.4
<i>Ceryle rudis</i>	Pied Kingfisher	x			<i>Andropadus curvirostris</i>	Cameroon Sombre Greenbul	x	1.4
<b>Meropidae</b>					<i>Andropadus gracilirostris</i>	Slender-billed Greenbul		1.8
<i>Merops gularis</i>	Black Bee-eater	x	x	x	<i>Andropadus latirostris</i>	Yellow-whiskered Greenbul	x	8.4
<i>Merops pusillus</i>	Little Bee-eater	x	x		<i>Calyptocichla serina+</i>	Golden Greenbul		0.9
<i>Merops albicollis</i>	White-throated Bee-eater	x			<i>Baepogon indicator</i>	Honeyguide Greenbul	x	0.4

		Ezealor (2001)	Green et al. (2007)	This study	Ezealor (2001)	Green et al. (2007)	This Study
<i>Ixonotus guttatus</i>	Spotted Greenbul	x	x	6.6	<b>Remizidae</b>		
<i>Chlorocichla simplex+</i>	Simple Leaflove			1.6	<i>Pholidornis rushiae</i>	Tit-hylia	x 0.2
<i>Thescelocichla leucopleura</i>	Swamp Palm Bulbul	x	x		<b>Nectariniidae</b>		
<i>Pyrhurus scandens+</i>	Leaflove			0.5	<i>Anthreptes seimundi+</i>	Little Green Sunbird	2.1
<i>Phyllastreps icterinus</i>	Icterine Greenbul	x	x	3.2	<i>Deleornis fraseri</i>	Fraser's Sunbird	x x 0.2
<i>Bleda syndactylus</i>	Red-tailed Bristlebill			3.6	<i>Cyanomitra cyanolaema</i>	Blue-throated Brown Sunbird	x x 0.5
<i>Bleda canicapillus</i>	Grey-headed Bristlebill	x	x	0.9	<i>Cyanomitra olivacea</i>	Olive Sunbird	x 0.9
<i>Cnemiger barbatus</i>	Western Bearded Greenbul	x	x	4.3	<i>Chalcomitra adelberti</i>	Buff-throated Sunbird	x x 2.1
<i>Cnemiger calurus</i>	Red-tailed Greenbul	x	x	7.7	<i>Hedydipna collaris</i>	Collared Sunbird	x 1.1
<i>Cnemiger ndussumensis</i>	White-bearded Greenbul	x		0.5	<i>Cinnyris chloropygius</i>	Olive-bellied Sunbird	x 1.3
<i>Pycnonotus barbatus</i>	Common Bulbul			x 1.3	<i>Cinnyris superbus</i>	Superb Sunbird	x x
<i>Nicator chlons</i>	Western Nicator	x	x	4.1	<i>Cinnyris batesi</i>	Bates's Sunbird	x 0.4
<b>Turdidae</b>					<b>Zosteropidae</b>		
<i>Stiphronis erythrothorax</i>	Forest Robin	x	x	4.5	<i>Zosterops senegalensis</i>	Yellow White-eye	x
<i>Alethe (diadema) castanea</i>	Fire-crested Alethe	x	x	1.3	<b>Malacoptidae</b>		
<i>Alethe poliocephala</i>	Brown-chested Alethe			x	<i>Malacoptonus multicolor+</i>	Many-coloured Bushshrike	0.2
<i>Neocossyphus poensis</i>	White-tailed Ant Thrush	x	x	4.4	<i>Dryoscopus sabini</i>	Sabine's Puffback	x 3.8
<i>Stizorhina finschi+</i>	Finsch's Flycatcher Thrush			0.7	<i>Dryoscopus gambensis</i>	Northern Puffback	x
<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>	Whinchat	x			<b>Oriolidae</b>		
<i>Myrmecocichla albifrons</i>	White-fronted Black Chat	x			<i>Oriolus nigripennis</i>	Black-winged Oriole	x x 1.3
<i>Zoothera princei</i>	Grey Ground Thrush	x			<i>Oriolus brachyrhynchos</i>	Western Black-headed Oriole	x 4.7
<i>Turdus pelios</i>	African Thrush	x		0.2	<b>Dicruridae</b>		
<b>Sylviidae</b>					<i>Dicrurus ludwigii+</i>	Square-tailed Drongo	0.2
<i>Hippolais polyglotta</i>	Melodious Warbler	x			<i>Dicrurus atripennis</i>	Shining Drongo	x 2.1
<i>Cisticola erythrops+</i>	Red-faced Cisticola		x		<i>Dicrurus modestus</i>	Velvet-mantled Drongo	x 1.1
<i>Cisticola anomymus</i>	Chattering Cisticola	x	x		<b>Corvidae</b>		
<i>Prinia subflava</i>	Tawny-flanked Prinia	x	x		<i>Corvus albus*</i>	Pied Crow	x
<i>Apalis nigriceps</i>	Black-capped Apalis		x	0.4	<b>Sturnidae</b>		
<i>Apalis rufigularis</i>	Buff-throated Apalis	x		2.1	<i>Onychognathus fulgidus+</i>	Forest Chestnut-winged Starling	x
<i>Camaroptera brachyura</i>	Grey-backed Camaroptera	x		1.3	<i>Lamprotornis purpureiceps</i>	Purple-headed Glossy Starling	x
<i>Camaroptera superciliaris</i>	Yellow-browed Camaroptera	x	x	3.4	<i>Lamprotornis splendidus</i>	Splendid Glossy Starling	x
<i>Camaroptera chloronota</i>	Olive-green Camaroptera		x		<i>Cinnyricinclus leucogaster</i>	Violet-backed Starling	x
<i>Macrosphenus concolor</i>	Grey Longbill	x	x	3.9	<b>Passeridae</b>		
<i>Macrosphenus kempfi</i>	Kemp's Longbill			2.7	<i>Passer griseus</i>	Northern Grey-headed Sparrow	x x
<i>Sylvietta virens</i>	Green Crombec	x	x	1.6	<b>Ploceidae</b>		
<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	Willow Warbler		x		<i>Malimbus scutatus</i>	Red-vented Malimbe	x x 0.2
<i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>	Wood Warbler	x			<i>Malimbus malimbicus</i>	Crested Malimbe	x 0.7
<i>Hyla prasina</i>	Green Hylia	x	x	3.4	<i>Malimbus nitens</i>	Blue-billed Malimbe	x x 3.4
<b>Muscicapidae</b>					<i>Malimbus rubricollis</i>	Red-headed Malimbe	x x 0.4
<i>Frasera ocreata</i>	Fraser's Forest Flycatcher	x		0.2	<i>Ploceus nigricollis</i>	Black-necked Weaver	x
<i>Frasera cinerascens</i>	White-browed Forest Flycatcher	x		0.2	<i>Ploceus nigerrimus</i>	Vieillot's Black Weaver	x 0.4
<i>Muscicapa strata</i>	Spotted Flycatcher		x		<i>Ploceus cucullatus</i>	Village Weaver	x x
<i>Muscicapa fluvicollis</i>	Sooty Flycatcher			0.4	<i>Ploceus tricolor</i>	Yellow-mantled Weaver	x x x
<i>Muscicapa cassini</i>	Cassin's Flycatcher	x	x	0.2	<i>Ploceus albinucha</i>	Maxwell's Black Weaver	x 1.4
<i>Muscicapa comitata</i>	Dusky-blue Flycatcher	x			<i>Pachyphantes superciliosus</i>	Compact Weaver	x
<i>Myiopterus plumbeus</i>	Lead-coloured Flycatcher		x		<b>Estrildidae</b>		
<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>	Pied Flycatcher	x			<i>Nigrita luteifrons</i>	Pale-fronted Negronfinch	x x x
<b>Monarchidae</b>					<i>Nigrita canicapillus</i>	Grey-headed Negronfinch	x 1.6
<i>Erythrocercus mccallii</i>	Chestnut-capped Flycatcher	x		2.0	<i>Nigrita fusconotus+</i>	White-breasted Negronfinch	0.7
<i>Elminia longirostrata</i>	Dusky Crested Flycatcher	x	x		<i>Nigrita bicolor</i>	Chestnut-breasted Negronfinch	x x
<i>Trochocercus nitens</i>	Blue-headed Crested Flycatcher	x	x	3.8	<i>Parmoptila woodhousei</i>	Red-headed Antpecker	x x
<i>Tersiphone viridis</i>	African Paradise Flycatcher		x		<i>Spermophaga haematina</i>	Western Bluebill	x
<i>Tersiphone rufiventer</i>	Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher	x	x	2.5	<i>Estrilda melodia</i>	Orange-cheeked Waxbill	x x
<b>Platysteiridae</b>					<i>Lonchura cucullata</i>	Bronze Mannikin	x x
<i>Megabyas fuscicauda</i>	Shrike Flycatcher		x		<i>Lonchura bicolor</i>	Black-and-white Mannikin	x 1.1
<i>Dyaphorophya castanea</i>	Chestnut Wattle-eye	x	x	2.3	<b>Viduidae</b>		
<i>Dyaphorophya concreta</i>	Yellow-bellied Wattle-eye			0.2	<i>Vidua macroura</i>	Pin-tailed Whydah	x x
<i>Platysteira cyanea</i>	Common Wattle-eye	x	x	0.2			
<b>Timaliidae</b>							
<i>Adscita rubropennis</i>	Pale-breasted Illadopsis	x		6.3			
<i>Adscita illovensis</i>	Brown Illadopsis	x		3.2			

# A bird survey of the Ruvuma Delta, northern Mozambique

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**Un inventaire ornithologique du Delta de la Ruvuma, Mozambique du nord.** Sont présentés ici les résultats d'un inventaire ornithologique réalisé en mai 2008 dans la partie mozambicaine du Delta de la Ruvuma, Région de Cabo Delgado. Au total, 146 espèces d'oiseaux ont été recensées, dont neuf individus du Crabier blanc *Ardeola idae*, classé comme Menacé d'extinction, et huit des 25 espèces confinées au biome côtier est africain connues du Mozambique. Malgré le fait que le Delta de la Ruvuma soit encore relativement bien préservé, il est gravement menacé par l'expansion rapide de l'agriculture, la chasse, l'exploitation projetée du pétrole et du gaz, et l'extraction illégale du bois. Les auteurs proposent qu'une partie des revenus potentiellement énormes qui vont être générés par l'exploitation du pétrole soient utilisés pour le développement d'initiatives de conservation dans la zone.

**Summary.** We present the results of a survey undertaken in May 2008 in the Mozambican part of the Ruvuma River delta, Cabo Delgado Region. One hundred and forty-six species were observed, including nine individuals of the globally Endangered Madagascar Pond Heron *Ardeola idae* and eight of the 25 species restricted to the East African Coast biome occurring in Mozambique. Despite being still relatively well preserved, the Ruvuma Delta is highly threatened by rapidly expanding agriculture, hunting, planned oil and gas drilling, and illegal timber extraction. We suggest that part of the potentially huge incomes that will be generated by oil exploitation should be used to develop conservation initiatives in the area.

Mozambique remains one of the ornithologically least-explored parts of continental Africa. Following the civil war, which ended in 1992, improved security and political stability have enabled scientific exploration, but most of the work so far has been concentrated south of the Zambezi Delta (Parker 1999, 2005a). In northern Mozambique, ornithological knowledge is still restricted to information collected decades ago (Vincent 1933, 1934), although some small areas have been the object of more detailed studies recently (Ryan *et al.* 1999, Parker 2005b, Spottiswoode *et al.* 2008). Overall, the limited knowledge of the northern Mozambique avifauna seriously impedes conservation efforts. Only 15 Important Bird Areas have to date been recognised in the country, whereas neighbouring countries with comparable sizes and habitats have a substantially higher number (e.g. Tanzania: 76; South Africa: 101; Zambia: 31; Fishpool & Evans 2001). Thus, there are good reasons to suspect that several important sites might still be undiscovered in Mozambique, and there is an urgent need to identify these before they are irreparably damaged by the rapid expansion of human activities.

Amongst the habitats of highest conservation importance in the country are forests, where 13 of the 22 threatened or restricted-range species occur, and coastal wetlands, which are known to host important concentrations of waterbirds, but whose importance is difficult to assess due to the lack of data (Parker 2001).

Here we report the results of a short ornithological survey undertaken in the Ruvuma River delta (Cabo Delgado Region) in May 2008. This area, at the border between Mozambique and Tanzania, is occupied by a large river delta, with extensive wetlands, mangrove and coastal forest that make it potentially extremely important for conservation.

## Study area

The Ruvuma Delta, at the border between Mozambique and Tanzania, is almost equally split between the two countries (Fig. 1). Satellite images taken in the year 2000 (downloaded from [www.glcf.umiacs.umd.edu](http://www.glcf.umiacs.umd.edu)) show that the Mozambican side of the delta covers c.150 km<sup>2</sup>, which includes the following six major habitats:

- **Mangrove** (*c.*80–90 km<sup>2</sup>) largely dominated by *Rhizophora mucronata*, which in places forms dense stands up to 20 m tall (Fig. 2). Other common species include *Avicennia marina*, *Sonneratia alba*, *Bruguiera gymnorhiza*, *Ceriops tagal* and *Xylocarpum granatum*.
- **Sandy beaches** (10–12 linear km) usually bordered by a belt of the palm *Hyphaene coriacea* along the inland side.
- **Mudflats** (15 km<sup>2</sup>) usually with a scattered cover of low *Avicennia marina* bushes.
- **Grassland/bush** (15 km<sup>2</sup>; Fig. 3); at the time of the survey (shortly after the end of the rains) this was dominated by tall grasses (1–2 m tall) with scattered bushes (*Strychnos spinosa*, *Hyphaene coriacea*, *Guettarda speciosa*, *Ochna* spp.) and trees (*Parinari curatellifolia*, *Tamarindus indica*, *Acacia* spp.). Probably this habitat is maintained by frequent dry-season fires whose traces are easy to observe.
- **Thicket/forest** (20 km<sup>2</sup>; Fig. 3), with canopy 10–20 m tall and dominated by *Brachystegia* spp., *Afzelia quanzensis*, *Ozoroa obovata*, *Albizia glaberrima*, *Commiphora serrata*; the undergrowth usually comprises species such as *Rawsonia lucida*, *Erythroxylon emarginatum*, *E. platyclados*, *Suregada zanzibarica*.
- **Freshwater wetlands** (*c.*1 km<sup>2</sup>; Fig. 4), usually represented by small ponds (100–500 m diameter) with dense aquatic vegetation (Cyperaceae and Graminaceae). According to local people, the largest of these ponds do not dry out, even in the dry season.

We spent most of the survey period on Ilha Suafo, a small, triangular-shaped island fringed by dense mangrove and with an interior of grassland and thicket/forest (Fig. 1). Ilha Suafo has a small, but rapidly growing, human population (200–400 inhabitants), which practices fishing and agriculture (rice, maize, cassava). From 6 to 17 May we camped at a site called Kasharifu (10°29'S 40°30'E), in the north of Ilha Suafo, and from 18 to 21 May at Asharati, in the south of the island. We also occasionally visited the mainland (Quionga and Namoto) but made few ornithological observations there, as we mainly searched for small mammals.

## Methods

Birds were identified by their calls, visual observations and mist-netting. Boat trips were made in the mangrove channels and along the sea coast (Fig. 1), although these were impeded by strong winds. Mist-netting was undertaken at four sites (three grassland/bush and one thicket/forest) at Kasharifu and one site at Asharati (thicket/forest). At each of these 9–15 mist-nets were opened from 05.00 to 10.00 hrs and from 16.00 to 17.30 hrs. Captured birds were banded using rings of the East African ringing scheme.

## Results

### Birds

One hundred and forty-six species were observed (Table 1), including eight of the 25 species restricted to the East African Coast biome occurring in Mozambique (Fishpool & Evans 2001). Although the majority of the species that we observed were typical of open or aquatic habitats, we also found a substantial number of forest-dependent species, including Ayres's Hawk Eagle *Hieraetus ayresii*, Crested Guineafowl *Guttera pucherani*, Trumpeter Hornbill *Bycanistes bucinator*, Eastern Nicator *Nicator gularis*, Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher *Trochocercus cyanomelas* and Green Twinspot *Mandingoa nitidula*.

**Table 1.** Bird species recorded in the Ruvuma Delta, including information on relevant habitats utilised. Species marked with an asterisk are endemic to the East African Coastal biome (Fishpool & Evans 2001).

**Tableau 1.** Espèces d'oiseaux observées dans le Delta de la Ruvuma, avec indication des habitats utilisés. Les espèces marquées d'un astérisque sont endémiques au biome côtier est africain (Fishpool & Evans 2001).

Common name/Scientific name	Sandy beaches	Mangroves	Mudflats	Grassland / bush	Thicket / forest	Wetlands	Agriculture
<b>Ardeidae</b>							
Dwarf Bittern <i>Ixobrychus sturmii</i>							x
Madagascar Pond Heron <i>Ardeola idae</i>							x
Cattle Egret <i>Bubulcus ibis</i>				x			x
Striated Heron <i>Butorides striata</i>				x			
Dimorphic Egret <i>Egretta dimorpha</i>				x	x		
Great White Egret <i>Egretta alba</i>				x			
Goliath Heron <i>Ardea goliath</i>				x			
<b>Scopidae</b>							
Hamerkop <i>Scopus umbretta</i>	x	x					x

Common name/Scientific name	Sandy beaches	Mangroves	Mudflats	Grassland / bush	Thicket / forest	Wetlands	Agriculture	Common name/Scientific name	Sandy beaches	Mangroves	Mudflats	Grassland / bush	Thicket / forest	Wetlands	Agriculture
<b>Ciconiidae</b>								<b>Cuculidae</b>							
African Openbill Stork <i>Anastomus lamelligerus</i>	x			x				Jacobin Cuckoo <i>Clamator jacobinus</i>				x	x		
Woolly-necked Stork <i>Ciconia episcopus</i>	x							Klaas's Cuckoo <i>Chrysococcyx klaas</i>			x	x			
Saddle-billed Stork <i>Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis</i>	x							Didric Cuckoo <i>Chrysococcyx caprius</i>			x	x			
<b>Threskiornithidae</b>								White-browed Coucal <i>Centropus superciliosus</i>			x	x			
Hadada Ibis <i>Bostrychia hagedash</i>	x			x				<b>Strigidae</b>							
<b>Anatidae</b>								African Wood Owl <i>Strix woodfordii</i>			x				
White-faced Whistling Duck <i>Dendrocygna viduata</i>					x			<b>Caprimulgidae</b>							
Egyptian Goose <i>Alopochen aegyptiaca</i>					x			Square-tailed Nightjar <i>Caprimulgus fossii</i>			x				
Spur-winged Goose <i>Plectropterus gambensis</i>					x			Fiery-necked Nightjar <i>Caprimulgus pectoralis</i>			x				
Red-billed Teal <i>Anas erythrorhyncha</i>					x			<b>Apodidae</b>							
<b>Accipitridae</b>								Mottled Spinetail <i>Telacanthura ussheri</i>				x			
Bat Hawk <i>Macheiramphus alcinus</i>			x	x				African Palm Swift <i>Cypsiurus parvus</i>			x				
Black Kite <i>Milvus migrans</i>	x	x	x	x	x			Little Swift <i>Apus affinis</i>			x				
African Fish Eagle <i>Haliaeetus vocifer</i>	x	x						<b>Coliidae</b>							
Black-chested Snake Eagle <i>Circaetus pectoralis</i>					x			Red-faced Mousebird <i>Urocolius indicus</i>			x	x			
Brown Snake Eagle <i>Circaetus cinereus</i>				x	x			<b>Alcedinidae</b>							
Bateleur <i>Terathopius ecaudatus</i>			x	x	x			Brown-hooded Kingfisher <i>Halcyon albiventris</i>				x			
African Harrier Hawk <i>Polyboroides typus</i>				x	x			Mangrove Kingfisher* <i>Halcyon senegaloides</i>		x					
African Goshawk <i>Accipiter tachiro</i>					x	x		Striped Kingfisher <i>Halcyon chelicuti</i>				x			
Ayres's Hawk Eagle <i>Hieraethus ayresii</i>						x		African Pygmy Kingfisher <i>Ceyx pictus</i>			x				
<b>Numididae</b>								Malachite Kingfisher <i>Alcedo cristata</i>			x				
Crested Guineafowl <i>Guttera pucherani</i>					x			Pied Kingfisher <i>Ceryle rudis</i>				x			
Helmeted Guineafowl <i>Numida meleagris</i>				x				<b>Meropidae</b>							
<b>Phasianidae</b>								Little Bee-eater <i>Merops pusillus</i>			x	x			
Harlequin Quail <i>Coturnix delegorguei</i>				x				Swallow-tailed Bee-eater <i>Merops hirundineus</i>			x	x			
Crested Francolin <i>Francolinus sephaena</i>				x				Madagascar Bee-eater <i>Merops superciliosus</i>			x	x			
<b>Jacanidae</b>								<b>Coraciidae</b>							
African Jacana <i>Actophilornis africanus</i>					x			Lilac-breasted Roller <i>Coracias caudatus</i>			x	x			
<b>Dromadidae</b>								Broad-billed Roller <i>Eurystomus glaucurus</i>			x				
Crab-plover <i>Dromas ardeola</i>			x					<b>Phoeniculidae</b>							
<b>Recurvirostridae</b>								Common Scimitarbill <i>Rhinopomastus cyanomelas</i>			x				
Black-winged Stilt <i>Himantopus himantopus</i>				x				<b>Bucerotidae</b>							
<b>Burhinidae</b>								Crowned Hornbill <i>Tockus alboterminatus</i>			x	x			
Water Thick-knee <i>Burhinus vermiculatus</i>			x					Trumpeter Hornbill <i>Bycanistes bucinator</i>			x				
Spotted Thick-knee <i>Burhinus capensis</i>			x					<b>Capitonidae</b>							
<b>Charadriidae</b>								Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird <i>Pogoniulus bilineatus</i>		x	x				
Three-banded Plover <i>Charadrius tricollaris</i>			x					Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird <i>Pogoniulus chrysoconus</i>			x				
White-fronted Plover <i>Charadrius marginatus</i>	x	x	x					<b>Picidae</b>							
Greater Sand Plover <i>Charadrius leschenaultii</i>	x							Green-backed Woodpecker <i>Campethera cailliautii</i>		x	x				
<b>Scolopacidae</b>								Cardinal Woodpecker <i>Dendropicos fuscescens</i>		x	x				
Sanderling <i>Calidris alba</i>	x							Bearded Woodpecker <i>Dendropicos namaquus</i>		x	x				
Whimbrel <i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	x	x						<b>Alaudidae</b>							
Terek Sandpiper <i>Xenus cinereus</i>	x	x						Flapwing Lark <i>Mirafrla rufocinnamomea</i>			x				
<b>Sternidae</b>								<b>Hirundinidae</b>							
Greater Crested Tern <i>Sterna bergii</i>	x							Lesser Striped Swallow <i>Cercropis abyssinica</i>			x				
Lesser Crested Tern <i>Sterna bengalensis</i>	x							Wire-tailed Swallow <i>Hirundo smithii</i>		x	x				
<b>Columbidae</b>								Barn Swallow <i>Hirundo rustica</i>		x	x				
African Green Pigeon <i>Treron calvus</i>			x					<b>Motacillidae</b>							
Tourmaline Dove <i>Turtur tympanistria</i>			x					African Pied Wagtail <i>Motacilla aguimp</i>				x			
Emerald-spotted Wood Dove <i>Turtur chalcospilos</i>		x	x					Grassland Pipit <i>Anthus cinnamomeus</i>		x	x				
Red-eyed Dove <i>Streptopelia semitorquata</i>		x	x	x				Woodland Pipit <i>Anthus nyassae</i>		x	x				
Ring-necked Dove <i>Streptopelia capicola</i>	x	x	x	x				Yellow-throated Longclaw <i>Macronyx croceus</i>			x				
<b>Psittacidae</b>								<b>Campephagidae</b>							
Brown-headed Parrot* <i>Poicephalus cryptoxanthus</i>		x	x					Black Cuckoo-shrike <i>Campephaga flava</i>			x				

Common name/Scientific name	Sandy beaches	Mangroves	Mudflats	Grassland / bush	Thicket / forest	Wetlands	Agriculture	Common name/Scientific name	Sandy beaches	Mangroves	Mudflats	Grassland / bush	Thicket / forest	Wetlands	Agriculture
<b>Pycnonotidae</b>								<b>Ploceidae</b>							
Sombre Greenbul <i>Andropadus importunus</i>	x	x	x					Spectacled Weaver <i>Ploceus ocularis</i>					x	x	
Yellow-bellied Greenbul <i>Chlorocichla flavigaster</i>	x							Yellow Weaver <i>Ploceus subaureus</i>				x	x	x	
Fischer's Greenbul* <i>Phyllastrephus fischeri</i>	x	x						Village Weaver <i>Ploceus cucullatus</i>				x	x	x	
Common Bulbul <i>Pycnonotus barbatus</i>	x	x	x					Thick-billed Weaver <i>Amblyospiza albifrons</i>				x			
Eastern Nicator <i>Nicator gularis</i>			x					Red-headed Quelea <i>Quelea erythrops</i>				x	x		
<b>Turdidae</b>				x	x	x		Red-billed Quelea <i>Quelea quelea</i>				x		x	
Red-capped Robin Chat <i>Cossypha natalensis</i>		x	x					Zanzibar Bishop* <i>Euplectes nigroventris</i>				x			
Bearded Scrub Robin <i>Cercotrichas quadricincta</i>	x	x	x	x				Black-winged Bishop <i>Euplectes hordeaceus</i>				x			
<b>Sylviidae</b>				x				Yellow Bishop <i>Euplectes capensis</i>				x			
Little Rush Warbler <i>Bradypterus baboecala</i>				x				<b> Estrildidae</b>							
Red-faced Crombec <i>Sylvietta whytii</i>	x	x						Green Twinspot <i>Mandingoa nitidula</i>				x			
Willow Warbler <i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	x							Common Waxbill <i>Estrilda astrild</i>				x	x		
<b>Cisticolidae</b>								Red-throated Twinspot <i>Hypargos niveoguttatus</i>				x	x		
Red-faced Cisticola <i>Cisticola erythrops</i>	x							Green-winged Pytilia <i>Pytilia melba</i>				x	x	x	
Croaking Cisticola <i>Cisticola natalensis</i>	x							Red-billed Firefinch <i>Lagonosticta senegala</i>				x	x	x	
Siffling Cisticola <i>Cisticola brachypterus</i>	x							Bronze Mannikin <i>Lonchura cucullata</i>				x			
Zitting Cisticola <i>Cisticola juncidis</i>	x	x						Black-and-white Mannikin <i>Lonchura bicolor</i>				x			
Tawny-flanked Prinia <i>Prinia subflava</i>	x	x	x	x				Magpie Mannikin <i>Lonchura fringilloides</i>				x			
Yellow-breasted Apalis <i>Apalis flavida</i>	x	x						<b>Viduidae</b>							
Green-backed Camaroptera <i>Camaroptera brachyura</i>	x	x	x					Pin-tailed Whydah <i>Vidua macroura</i>				x	x		
<b>Muscicapidae</b>								<b> Fringillidae</b>							
Southern Black Flycatcher <i>Melanorhinus pammelaina</i>				x				Yellow-fronted Canary <i>Serinus mozambicus</i>				x	x		
Grey Tit-Flycatcher <i>Myioparus plumbeus</i>	x														
<b>Monarchidae</b>															
Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher <i>Trochocercus cyanomelas</i>			x												
African Paradise Flycatcher <i>Terpsiphone viridis</i>	x	x	x												
<b>Platysteiridae</b>															
Black-throated Wattle-eye <i>Platysteira peltata</i>			x												
Pale Batis* <i>Batis soror</i>	x	x	x	x											
<b>Nectariniidae</b>															
Eastern Olive Sunbird <i>Cyanomitra olivacea</i>			x												
Grey Sunbird* <i>Cyanomitra veroxii</i>	x	x	x	x											
Scarlet-chested Sunbird <i>Chalcomitra senegalensis</i>	x	x	x	x											
Collared Sunbird <i>Hedydipna collaris</i>	x		x												
Purple-banded Sunbird <i>Cinnyris bifasciatus</i>	x	x	x	x											
<b>Malacoptidae</b>															
Subur-breasted Bushshrike <i>Telophorus sulfureopectus</i>			x												
Gorgeous Bushshrike* <i>Telophorus viridis</i>			x												
Brown-crowned Tchagra <i>Tchagra australis</i>			x	x											
Black-backed Puffback <i>Dryoscopus cubla</i>			x	x	x										
Tropical Boubou <i>Laniarius aethiopicus</i>			x												
<b>Phoenopidae</b>															
White-bearded Manakin <i>Phoeniculus plumatus</i>			x												
Reitz's Manakin <i>Phoeniculus reitzi</i>			x												
<b>Onidae</b>															
Eastern Black-headed Oriole <i>Oriolus larvatus</i>			x	x											
<b>Dicrundidae</b>															
Black-tailed Drongo <i>Dicrurus adsimilis</i>			x												
<b>Corvidae</b>															
Red-Crow <i>Corvus albicollis</i>			x												
<b>Sturnidae</b>															
Black-bellied Starling* <i>Lamprotornis comatus</i>	x		x												
<b>Passeridae</b>															
House Sparrow <i>Passer domesticus</i>	x														

#### Captions to figures on opposite page

**Figure 2.** Large expanses of healthy and relatively well preserved mangroves still characterise the Ruvuma River delta (L. Borghesio)

De grandes étendues de mangroves relativement bien préservées sont toujours caractéristiques du Delta de la Ruvuma (L. Borghesio)

**Figure 3.** The interior of Ilha Suafo is occupied by a mosaic of tall grassland and thicket probably maintained by seasonal fires (L. Borghesio)

L'intérieur de l'Ilha Suafo est occupé par une mosaïque de prairies et de bosquets, qui est probablement maintenue par des feux de brousse saisonniers (L. Borghesio)

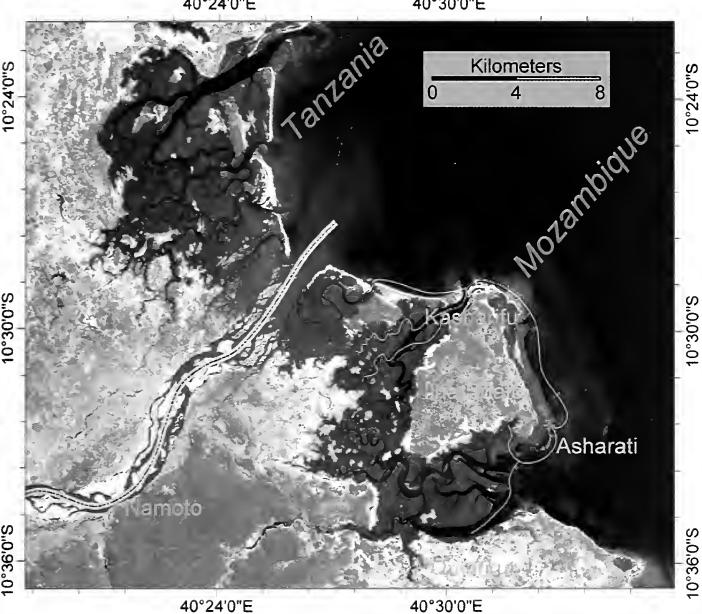
**Figure 4.** A small wetland with dense aquatic vegetation where Madagascar Pond Heron *Ardeola idae* was observed (L. Borghesio)

Une petite zone humide à végétation aquatique dense où le Crabe blanc *Ardeola idae* a été observé (L. Borghesio)

**Figure 5.** Grey Sunbird / Souimanga murin *Cyanomitra veroxii* (L. Borghesio)

**Figure 6.** Red-faced Cisticola / Cisticole à face rousse *Cisticola erythrops* (L. Borghesio)

**Figure 7.** Fischer's Greenbul / Bulbul de Fischer *Phyllastrephus fischeri* (L. Borghesio)



**Figure 1.** The Ruvuma Delta. The grey line marks the Mozambique/Tanzania border, yellow lines indicate those parts of the delta visited by boat. The false-colour image (Landsat ETM+ of May 2000) shows mangroves (deep red), sand beaches and mudflats (pale grey), thicket/low forest (orange) and grassland/bush (grey-green).

Le Delta de la Ruvuma. La ligne grise indique la frontière entre la Mozambique et la Tanzanie, les lignes jaunes indiquent les parties du delta qui ont été prospectées en bateau. L'image couleur (Landsat ETM+ de mai 2000) indique les mangroves (rouge foncé), les plages de sable et les vasières (gris pâle), les bosquets et forêts basses (orange) et les prairies et broussailles (gris-vert).



One globally threatened species, Madagascar Pond Heron *Ardeola idae* (Endangered: BirdLife International 2000, 2004) was also recorded. At least nine individuals of this non-breeding migrant to the East African coastal region were observed on 11 May 2008 in different ponds and small lakes in the interior of Ilha Suafo. As these ponds were densely vegetated, we suspect that the total number of of Madagascar Pond Herons was larger than we counted. During the survey, there was no noticeable sign of breeding activity. Of 237 mist-netted individuals, only three (two Black-headed Weavers, and one Fischer's Greenbul *Phyllastrephus fischeri*) had a brood patch.

#### *Other species*

Large mammals included Leopard *Panthera pardus*, Hippopotamus *Hippopotamus amphibius* and African Elephant *Loxodonta africana*. These species appeared to be quite widespread, but very shy and difficult to observe, undoubtedly due to human disturbance. Despite specific searches, we were unable to find any signs of the Dugong *Dugong dugon*, which, according to local people, disappeared from the area during the civil war.

We recorded four nesting attempts by sea turtles (three Green Turtles *Chelonia mydas* and one Hawksbill Turtle *Eretmochelys imbricata*); all these attempts were disrupted by human interference, and the adults were killed by local fishermen in at least two cases.

#### **Discussion**

Considering the short duration and the preliminary nature of our survey, the 146 species that we observed are likely to represent only an incomplete checklist of the avifauna of the Ruvuma Delta. Moreover, the fact that our survey was made during the boreal spring did not permit us to estimate the importance of the delta as a wintering or staging site for migratory Palearctic birds. Despite this, our data reveal that the Ruvuma hosts a substantial proportion of the bird fauna of the East African Coastal biome and at least one globally threatened species. Further studies will certainly provide more evidence of the importance of this site for bird conservation, especially considering the still-low human population and vast expanses of well-preserved natural habitats. For instance, several villagers in the area indicated the pres-

ence of colonies of the Near Threatened African Skimmer *Rhynchosoma flavirostris*, which we were unable to locate.

Even though until recently the Mozambican side of the Ruvuma has not been subject to large-scale habitat destruction, the situation might rapidly change in the near future. We noted four main threats.

- **Oil and gas drilling.** The recent discovery of potentially important oil and gas reserves (Anadarko Petroleum Corporation 2007) will probably result in the development of large oil extraction facilities on both the Mozambican and the Tanzanian sides of the delta. At the time of our visit, the roads to Quionga and Namoto were being upgraded and broadened with funds provided by the oil companies, with much damage to the adjacent forest. It is still too early to judge the size of the environmental damage that oil extraction might cause to the Ruvuma, but the huge impacts seen in other African countries are sufficient to cause much concern.
- **Agricultural expansion.** Habitat clearance for agriculture is progressing rapidly. At Ilha Suafo, practically all of the people declared that they had moved to the island in the last few years due to increasing land scarcity on the mainland. We estimate that c.300 ha of natural vegetation (10% of available land) have been cleared on the island since 2000. Clearance was by cutting and burning the natural vegetation, and the best-developed patches of natural forest appeared to have been specifically targeted, perhaps due to their being located on more fertile soil. Although agriculture still occupies a relatively small fraction of land in the area, the rapid expansion of this activity suggests that it might become an important threat to biodiversity in the near future.
- **Hunting.** Hunting is intense in northern Mozambique, and has already caused the local extinction of the Dugong. Hunting is also a severe threat to sea turtles, whose nesting success is close to zero based on our observations, and to numerous species of mammals (duikers, bush pigs, elephant shrews). Birds are also regularly and intensively hunted, not only by adults who mainly target large birds

(guineafowl, francolins), but also by children who use catapults and small traps to capture smaller species. Most people who we met on Ilha Suafo readily admitted to eating birds regularly.

- **Proximity of the Tanzanian border.** This factor, coupled with the severe lack of personnel and equipment of the local police, contribute to making the Mozambican side of the delta a lawless area. Numerous small villages inhabited by Tanzanian fishermen are scattered through the area. These fishermen appear to engage in various illegal activities, especially the extraction of timber in the mangroves and hunting sea turtles, thus further increasing the pressure on the environment.

More scientific work is needed to ascertain the biological importance of the Ruvuma Delta. But, even more importantly, urgent action needs to be taken to counter the environmental degradation that is occurring in the area. In particular, we suggest: (1) improved patrolling and law enforcement along the border to avoid illegal exploitation of natural resources by immigrants and (2) above all, oil extraction in the area should be developed in an environmentally sustainable way, with part of the potentially huge income used to improve conservation.

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# Unusual nest sites of Réunion Stonechat *Saxicola tectes* high in trees—a response to increased predation risk of ground nests?

Markus Handschuh

**Des nids du Traquet de la Réunion *Saxicola tectes* haut dans des arbres—une réponse à une augmentation du risque de prédition au sol?** En décembre 2003, des Traquets de la Réunion *Saxicola tectes* ont été observés occupant des territoires dans la plupart des habitats à haute altitude dans le nord de l'île. Cinq nids ont été trouvés, dont deux juste au-dessus du sol sur des talus, deux à une hauteur d'environ 9 m et 12 m dans des arbres du genre *Cryptomeria*, et un à environ 7 m dans une fougère arborescente *Cyathea* sp. L'emplacement du nid à une hauteur élevée au-dessus du sol est inhabituel pour le Traquet de la Réunion, une espèce endémique commune de l'île de la Réunion, et le genre *Saxicola* en général. Des emplacements pareils sont-ils communs quoique restés inaperçus jusqu'à présent? Ou sont-ils dûs à l'absence locale de sites de nidification typiques, à un niveau localement élevé de dérangement, ou à une augmentation du risque de prédition des nids au sol par des mammifères prédateurs introduits? Cette dernière hypothèse semble être la plus plausible. Des études plus poussées sont toutefois nécessaires afin de déterminer si l'utilisation d'arbres comme site de nidification est un phénomène de plus en plus fréquent, ce qui pourrait avoir des implications pour la conservation.

**Summary.** In December 2003, territory-holding Réunion Stonechats *Saxicola tectes*, a common Réunion endemic, were encountered in most habitat types at higher elevations in the north of the island. Five nests were found, of which two were low above the ground on banks, whilst two were at c.9 m and c.12 m in *Cryptomeria* trees, and one at c.7 m in a tree fern *Cyathea* sp. Nest sites high above the ground are unusual for Réunion Stonechat and the genus *Saxicola* in general. Potential explanations include such sites being a more common but to date overlooked or unpublished trait of Réunion Stonechat, a local lack of typical nest sites, a locally high level of disturbance, or increased predation risk of ground nests by introduced mammalian predators. The latter explanation seems most likely. However, more detailed studies are required to investigate if tree nests are an increasingly frequent phenomenon with potential conservation implications.

Réunion Stonechat *Saxicola tectes* is endemic to the 2,500 km<sup>2</sup> island of Réunion, an overseas department of France in the Indian Ocean. The species is described as very common, typically at higher elevations of the island (e.g. Barré 1983, Barré *et al.* 1996), and currently is not considered globally threatened (BirdLife International 2009).

Although Réunion Stonechat is relatively conspicuous and easily observed, its breeding biology is not well known, and few detailed accounts of its nesting have been published (see Milon 1951 in Urquhart & Bowley 2002, Cheke 1987 and Probst 2002; a line drawing illustrates a typical nest in Barré *et al.* 1996). Here, I provide details on five nests found in December 2003.

## Methods

During a visit to Réunion in December 2003, I located five nests of Réunion Stonechat (see Table 1 for details) and made unsystematic observations on the species' habitat and nesting.

## Results and Discussion

### Habitat

Along a hiking track from the village Le Brûlé towards the protected forest of La Roche Écrite (altitudinal range: c.700–1,500 m) in the north of Réunion, territory-holding Réunion Stonechats were encountered in most habitat types except dense, single-species plantations of introduced Japanese Cedar *Cryptomeria japonica* bereft of undergrowth. At lower altitudes with mostly exot-



1



2



3



4

Captions to figures are on page 206

largely native, more open, mixed evergreen forest at higher altitudes, I found stonechat territories arranged linearly along the hiking track, with a territorial male every 100–300 m. However, I did not search for stonechats away from the trail.

Compared to other *Saxicola*, Réunion Stonechat occupies a broader range of habitats (Urquhart & Bowley 2002). According to Barré *et al.* (1996) and Cheke (1987), it can be found almost anywhere from the lower extent of the forest at 300–800 m up to the highest elevations at

secondary growth, stonechat territories appeared clumped around openings and clearings. In the

*c.*3,000 m. Probst (2002) adds that in parts of the south it still occurs down to sea level and also mentions a nest at 3,050 m on the Piton des Neiges. Cheke (1987) notes that the stonechat is the only Turdidae on the island and therefore takes advantage of all the ‘small thrush’ niches open to it, i.e. open ground as well as closed-canopy forest, in addition to the scrub habitat typical of the genus *Saxicola*.

### Nest sites

Table 1 gives details of the five nests found. Two were on banks (Fig. 3), whilst the other three were high above the ground: two at *c.*9 m and *c.*12 m, respectively, in *Cryptomeria* trees (Fig. 1), and one *c.*7 m high in a *Cyathea* tree fern (Fig. 2). The nest sites several metres above ground are unusual. Réunion Stonechats normally nest on the ground under a tussock or in a tuft of ground vegetation, or on vegetated banks along forest tracks (Milon

1951 in Urquhart & Bowley 2002, Barré *et al.* 1996, Cheke 1987, Probst 2002). Although Barré *et al.* (1996) mention that, occasionally, nests are located in trees, on the lower branches or in a trunk cavity 1–2 m above the ground, I have found no account of the species nesting higher up in trees.

Nest sites high above the ground are also unusual for the genus *Saxicola* in general, as its members typically nest on or near the ground in the cover of the field layer (Urquhart & Bowley 2002). There are several potential explanations for the high nest sites reported here. (1) Tree nests are a more common but to date overlooked trait of Réunion Stonechat. This explanation is unlikely, as the nesting of Réunion Stonechat has previously been studied systematically and in greater detail (Milon 1951 in Urquhart & Bowley 2002, Cheke 1987, Probst 2002), and available information on the birds of Réunion has been collected and compiled (Barré *et al.* 1996, Barré & Barau 1982), but not a single nest high in a tree has been reported. If it is a regular trait of the species, then it would most likely have been noted before.

(2) Local lack of typical nest sites. This is also unlikely, as in each of the three cases reported here potential typical nest sites were readily available both in the vicinity and in the wider surroundings of the nesting trees. At the picnic site these were in the form of areas with a well-developed field layer, such as patches of rough grass, vegetated banks and margins of roads and tracks, and root plates of fallen trees. Furthermore, the nest in a tree fern in native forest was located only *c.*200 m from a typical bank nest in the same habitat.

(3) Locally high levels of disturbance. Frequent and / or heavy disturbance may cause birds to nest high above the ground. However, the two nests on banks were located directly on the edge of a narrow, well-used hiking trail (during my observations several people passed the nest *<2* m from the incubating female, without it leaving the nest) and a small road (with cars passing at a distance of *<3* m), respectively. According to A. S. Cheke (pers. comm.), stonechats have successfully nested alongside the same trail for decades. Also, almost all of the Réunion Stonechats I encountered seemed relatively unwaried of people, independent of whether they had an active nest or not.

(4) Predator avoidance / locally increased predation risk of ground nests. The most likely reason

### Captions to photos on page 205

**Figure 1.** Nest site of Réunion Stonechat *Saxicola tectes* *c.*12 m above the ground in Japanese Cedar *Cryptomeria japonica* tree, Réunion, 17 December 2003. The arrow indicates the location of the nest (Markus Handschuh)

Site de nidification du Traquet de la Réunion *Saxicola tectes* dans un Cèdre japonais *Cryptomeria japonica* à environ 12 m au-dessus du sol, Réunion, 17 décembre 2003. La flèche indique l'emplacement du nid (Markus Handschuh)

**Figure 2.** Nest site of Réunion Stonechat *Saxicola tectes* *c.*7 m above the ground in tree fern *Cyathea*, Réunion, 17 December 2003. The arrow indicates the location of the nest (Markus Handschuh)

Site de nidification du Traquet de la Réunion *Saxicola tectes* dans une fougère arborescente *Cyathea* à environ 7 m au-dessus du sol, Réunion, 17 décembre 2003. La flèche indique l'emplacement du nid (Markus Handschuh)

**Figure 3.** Typical nest site of Réunion Stonechat *Saxicola tectes* on a vegetated bank, Réunion, 17 December 2003. The arrow indicates the location of the nest (Markus Handschuh)

Site de nidification typique du Traquet de la Réunion *Saxicola tectes* dans un talus herbeux, Réunion, 17 décembre 2003. La flèche indique l'emplacement du nid (Markus Handschuh)

**Figure 4.** Nest and eggs of Réunion Stonechat *Saxicola tectes*, Réunion, 17 December 2003 (Markus Handschuh)

Nid et œufs du Traquet de la Réunion *Saxicola tectes*, Réunion, 17 décembre 2003 (Markus Handschuh)

**Table 1.** Details of five nests of Réunion Stonechat *Saxicola tectes* found in December 2003.<sup>123</sup> = For photograph of nest site see Figs. 1–3, respectively. <sup>4</sup> = For photograph of nest and eggs see Fig. 4.\* = Age estimated, based on nestling development of European Stonechat *S. torquatus rubicola* (pers. obs.).**Tableau 1.** Données sur cinq nids du Traquet de la Réunion *Saxicola tectes* trouvés en décembre 2003.<sup>123</sup> = Pour une photo de l'emplacement du nid, voir Figs. 1–3, respectivement.<sup>4</sup> = Pour une photo du nid et des œufs, voir Fig. 4.\* = Estimation de l'âge basée sur le développement des jeunes du Tarier pâtre *S. torquatus rubicola* (obs. pers.).

Nest no	1 <sup>1</sup>	2	3 <sup>2</sup>	4 <sup>3,4</sup>	5
Date	17 December 2003	17 December 2003	17 December 2003	17 December 2003	18 December 2003
Location and height a. s. l.	North Réunion, Mamode Camp, c.1,200 m	As nest 1	North Réunion, along hiking track to La Roche Ecrete, c.1,500 m	c.200 m from nest 3 along track, c.1,500 m	North Réunion near village Hell-Bourg, c.1,400 m
Habitat	Relatively flat, park-like, public picnic site, with single Japanese Cedar <i>Cryptomeria japonica</i> trees and various artificial vertical structures, surrounded by open Japanese Cedar plantation with grassy undergrowth	As nest 1	Steep terrain, mesothermic evergreen forest with dense undergrowth, short vegetation and bare soil	As nest 3	River valley with mostly steep topography and woods of exotic pine <i>Pinus</i> sp. and broadleaved trees
Nest site	c.12 m above ground in >20-m tall Japanese Cedar tree next to minor paved road; nest concealed in broom of dense short branches at trunk, dark spot and some nesting material visible from ground	c.9 m above ground in c.20-m tall Japanese Cedar tree; nest entirely concealed at base of first, dense, 1-m long branch, invisible from ground	Below track, c.7 m above ground in c.9-m tall live <i>Cyathea</i> tree fern, entirely concealed in cavity created by dead vegetation hanging from the trunk, invisible from outside	0.7 m above ground in semi-cavity on densely vegetated bank where the path had been cut from the slope; nest concealed by overhanging moss. Extent and shape of niche suggest that it may have been enlarged by the bird.	1.1 m above ground on vegetated rock face next to minor paved road; cavity behind clump of moss; nest entrance concealed by tuft of grass, only small hole visible from outside. Niche may have been enlarged by the bird.
Nest description	Outer walls mainly of dry grass and dry leaves, containing hardly any moss. Nest cup lined mainly with fine plant material and some animal hair and small feathers.	As nest 1	Not examined closely	Outer walls mainly of moss, resembling moss-dominated nests of European Robin <i>Erythacus rubecula</i> . Nest cup as nest 1.	As nest 4
Entrance faces	north-west	east	south-east	west	south
Nest contents *	Three nestlings c.9 days old	Two nestlings c.6 days old	Nest in construction	Presumably complete clutch of four eggs, female incubating	Presumably complete clutch of three eggs, female incubating

for high nest sites may be a (locally) increased predation risk of ground nests by introduced mammalian predators. Although the species is still common on Réunion (A. S. Cheke pers. comm.) and there is no published evidence that it suffers from high nest predation, which could cause birds to nest higher in trees, this may be a recent phenomenon that has not been noted in earlier studies (Milon 1951 in Urquhart & Bowley 2002, Cheke 1987, Probst 2002).

Both Black Rats *Rattus rattus* and Norway Rats *R. norvegicus* as well as feral Cats *Felis catus* have been introduced to Réunion (pers. obs.; Cheke & Hume 2008). The density of these

potential nest predators is likely to be higher at locations frequented by humans (see Cheke & Hume 2008), such as the picnic site, e.g. due to waste and leftover food. However, because at least Black Rats have been abundant in the forests of Réunion at all elevations for centuries (see Cheke & Hume 2008), feral cats are a more likely cause of a significant change in nest site selection (A. S. Cheke pers. comm.).

#### *Nest contents*

I found clutch sizes of three (nest 4) and four (nest 5) eggs, and brood sizes of two (nest 2) and three (nest 1) nestlings. Both incubating females

were sitting tightly at around midday and were therefore presumed to have finished their clutches. Of 12 completed clutches that Milon (1951 *in Urquhart & Bowley 2002*) recorded, 11 comprised three eggs and one four eggs. In 1973–74, Cheke (1987) found eight nests containing three eggs and six with eggs, and assumed the clutch size to be 2–3 eggs. However, Barré & Barau (1982), Barré *et al.* (1996) and Probst (2002) report clutch sizes of 2–4 (most commonly three) eggs.

## Conclusion

Nests of Réunion Stonechat high above the ground in trees merit further investigation to determine whether they are (a) a rare, irregular and local occurrence, or (b) more common and widespread but previously overlooked, or (c) a recent and perhaps increasingly frequent and widespread phenomenon. If the latter is the case, it should be established which factors cause tree nesting and, in particular, whether the phenomenon is related to predation of ground nests and therefore has potential implications for the conservation of this insular endemic passerine.

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# Three records of Solitary Sandpiper *Tringa solitaria* in The Gambia

Clive R. Barlow

**Trois mentions du Chevalier solitaire *Tringa solitaria* pour la Gambie.** Trois observations du Chevalier solitaire *Tringa solitaria* en Gambie sont présentées. Les observations ont été faites en janvier 1999, le 9 janvier 2005 et le 15 September 2007. Auparavant il n'y avait qu'une seule mention documentée de cette espèce néarctique pour l'Afrique continentale, de Zambie, en janvier–février 1994. Il y a par ailleurs deux mentions pour les Îles du Cap Vert, en mars 1997 et décembre 2004–janvier 2005, et une pour les Îles Canaries, en mars 2004.

There is just one well-substantiated record of Solitary Sandpiper *Tringa solitaria*, a Nearctic species, for mainland Africa, from Zambia, in January–February 1994 (Aspinwall *et al.* 1995), with another published subsequently without details from The Gambia, in January 1999 (Borrow & Demey 2001). Three others, from Angola, South Africa and Central African Republic, are all presently deemed unsatisfactory (Dowsett & Forbes-Watson 1993, Aspinwall *et al.* 1995). In addition, there are two records for the Cape Verde Islands, on Boavista, in March 1997 (Hazevoet 1998), and São Vicente, in December 2004 to January 2005, and one from the Canary Islands, in March 2004 (Clarke 2006). Solitary Sandpiper was not mentioned in the 1999 reprint of the Gambian field guide (Barlow *et al.* 1997). Presented here are three records for The Gambia, including further details of the 1999 record cited above. Two are supported by photographs, and the third only with field notes. Solitary Sandpiper breeds over Canada and much of Alaska, with most of the population wintering in the West Indies and through Middle America south to Argentina and Uruguay (Alström *et al.* 1991). It is an accidental visitor to Western Europe, principally in autumn, with 32 records prior to 2008 from the UK (Hudson & the Rarities Committee

2008), and other scattered records from Iceland to Spain.

## Identification

Solitary Sandpiper is most likely to be confused with Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*, which is a common visitor to The Gambia between October and March with records in all months of the year (Barlow *et al.* 1999). The on average marginally smaller Solitary Sandpiper has a pattern most closely resembling Green Sandpiper and a structure most like Wood Sandpiper *T. glareola*, which is, on average, the smallest species of the three. Solitary Sandpiper is dark brown above, heavily spotted buffy white, with white underparts, although the lower throat, breast and flanks are



**Figure 1.** Solitary Sandpiper *Tringa solitaria*, Kotu Sewage Farm, The Gambia, January 1999 (Erik Sanders)

Chevalier solitaire *Tringa solitaria*, Kotu Sewage Farm, Gambie, janvier 1999 (Erik Sanders)



**Figure 2.** Solitary Sandpiper *Tringa solitaria*, Abuko Nature Reserve, The Gambia, 9 January 2005 (Dick Forsman)

Chevalier solitaire *Tringa solitaria*, Réserve naturelle d'Abuko, Gambie, 9 janvier 2005 (Dick Forsman)

streaked blackish brown. Solitary Sandpiper has a more conspicuous, broader white orbital ring, creating the appearance of a larger eye. The legs are olive, and the wings project c.1–2 cm beyond the tail, producing a tapering effect, similar to that of Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*. Separation in flight is straightforward. Solitary Sandpiper has a dark rump, dark uppertail-coverts and dark central tail-feathers, whilst Green and Wood Sandpipers have clean, bright white rumps. When active, Solitary Sandpiper tips the tail upward and bobs in the manner of Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*. The call is a shrill double *peet-weet*, most frequently given when flushed. None of the Gambian birds was sound-recorded, or heard to call, but the Zambian individual was sound-recorded by R. Stjernstedt (Aspinwall *et al.* 1995).

### First record

In January 1999 (exact date now unknown), E. Sanders visited Kotu Sewage Farm, Kombo St Mary Division in coastal Gambia ( $13^{\circ}28'N$   $16^{\circ}43'W$ ), which adjoins Kotu Stream (an *Avicenna* mangrove-fringed creek that empties into the Atlantic Ocean). This well-watched area has played host to a diversity of Palearctic waders, marsh terns, some waterfowl and a number of Afrotropical wetland species. The site comprises four settling ponds into which raw sewage is pumped most days by tankers. The edges are frequently vegetated with emergent and decaying plant life, and household rubbish accumulates there. The photograph taken by ES (Fig. 1) shows the bird foraging on this matted waste.

### Second record

On 9 January 2005 D. Forsman visited Abuko Nature Reserve ( $13^{\circ}24'N$   $16^{\circ}39'W$ ) where he observed, photographed and video-taped a Solitary Sandpiper over a period of 20 minutes (Fig. 2).

### Third record

On 15 September 2007, K. Roy was watching birds along the beach south of Tanji Bird Reserve, a protected Important Bird Area ( $13^{\circ}24'N$   $16^{\circ}39'W$ ) of 617 ha. Using a telescope, KR was reading the numbers on colour-ringed Kelp *Larus dominicanus* and Lesser Black-backed Gulls *L. fuscus* when he noticed a Green Sandpiper-like bird near the tideline, a habitat which immediately struck him

as unusual for *Tringa ochropus*. Although the bird was only observed for <10 seconds before it flew, as it did so he clearly saw that the tail had barred sides and a dark band over the centre of the rump and tail. On his return to Banjul, KR showed CRB his comprehensive field notes and a sketch of the bird in flight. The features he observed are consistent with Solitary Sandpiper and eliminate Green Sandpiper. KR is very familiar with Solitary Sandpiper from Grenada in the West Indies during his stay there in the 1990s. Most of his sightings there were made on beaches. Just prior to this observation there were exceptional storms off The Gambia coast.

### Acknowledgements

Dick Forsman, Erik Sanders and Kevin Roy kindly furnished photographs and field data that made this note possible. Pete Leonard drew my attention to the Zambian record.

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# Oystercatcher *Haematopus* records from Angola

Robert E. Simmons<sup>a,b</sup>, Michael S. L. Mills<sup>a,c</sup> and W. Richard J. Dean<sup>a</sup>

**Observations d'huîtriers *Haematopus* en Angola.** Il y a peu d'observations d'huîtriers *Haematopus* en Angola. Avant 1975, il n'y avait que deux mentions de l'Huîtrier de Moquin *H. moquini*. Plus récemment, en 1999, l'espèce était toutefois assez commune le long de la côte au sud de la ville de Namibe. Des inventaires effectués en janvier 2009 le long du littoral du Parc National de Iona confirment que l'Huîtrier de Moquin est maintenant un visiteur non-nicheur régulier et assez commun au sud de l'Angola. Ceci est peut être dû à l'augmentation récente de sa population. En plus, un Huîtrier pie *H. ostralegus*, auparavant connu que d'une seule observation non confirmée en 1982, a été observé pendant ces inventaires, confirmant sa présence en Angola.

There are few documented records of oystercatchers *Haematopus* from Angola; neither Taylor (1963) nor Pinto (1983) included any species on the Angolan list. Dean (2000) includes only African Black Oystercatcher *H. moquini*, although he draws attention to a record by Günther & Feiler (1986) of a juvenile European Oystercatcher *H. ostralegus* from Ilha dos Passeros, Mussulo Bay, Luanda, in November 1982, which was reportedly photographed. We report here on additional records of both African Black Oystercatcher and Eurasian Oystercatcher from Angola.

## African Black Oystercatcher

On the north Namibian coast, African Black Oystercatchers are rare (Hockey 1983), and breeding occurs only south of the Hoanib River mouth, although only small numbers breed to the north of Lüderitz. Most records north of Lüderitz are of dispersing juveniles, which form flocks year-round and remain on the 'nursery' grounds for 2–3 years before returning to the breeding sites (Hockey 2005). J. C. Sinclair recorded the first African Black Oystercatchers in Angola; two at Lobito in May 1973 (Summers & Cooper 1977), the most northerly record accepted as valid by Hockey (1983). The second record, by K. H. Cooper, was of a single at Foz do Cunene in January 1975 (Dean *et al.* 1988). Dean (2000) lists a third record by Simmons *et al.* (1993) from the Cunene River mouth, in March–May 1991, although strictly this record is from Namibia. Subsequently, this species was recorded as reasonably common in January 1999 in southern Angola, with a total of

35 birds at Baia dos Tigres, Iona National Park, and a single at Namibe town (Dean *et al.* 2002, Simmons *et al.* 2006).

J. Mellenthin (pers. comm.) reported a single bird in December 2003 at Baia dos Tigres. RES visited the coastline of Iona National Park on 24–27 January 2009, conducting shorebird surveys from Tombua (15°48'S 11°51'E) to Foz do Cunene on the Namibian border (17°23'S 11°47'E). African Black Oystercatchers were recorded on three consecutive days, between Tombua and the northern end of Ilha dos Tigres on 24 January (four birds), at Baia dos Tigres on 25–26 January (35 birds) and on 24 January between these two localities (five birds). All birds were recorded in groups of four or more. These records confirm that African Black Oystercatchers are now at least a regular non-breeding visitor to southern Angola; these birds are probably mainly immature. Given the complete absence of earlier records, despite collecting trips by the Ornithology Department of the Instituto de Investigação Científica de Angola to the south-west coast, numbers in Angola appear to be increasing in line with the global population trend (Hockey 2005).

## Eurasian Oystercatcher

A single Eurasian Oystercatcher was seen on two consecutive days (25–26 January 2009) at Baia dos Tigres, together with a flock of African Black Oystercatchers (Fig. 1). Excepting the report by Günther & Feiler (1986), this is the first record of this species for the country, which can now be added to the Angolan list with confidence.



**Figure 1.** Eurasian Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*, Baia dos Tigres, Angola, January 2009, in company of African Black Oystercatchers *H. moquini* (Rob Simmons) Huîtrier pie *Haematopus ostralegus*, Baia dos Tigres, Angola, janvier 2009, avec Huîtriers de Moquin *H. moquini* (Rob Simmons)

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# First records for Seychelles of Jack Snipe *Lymnocryptes minimus*, Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula* and Plain Martin *Riparia paludicola*

Adrian Skerrett

Premières mentions pour les Seychelles de la Bécassine sourde *Lymnocryptes minimus*, du Fuligule morillon *Aythya fuligula* et de l'Hirondelle paludicole *Riparia paludicola*. Une Bécassine sourde *Lymnocryptes minimus* a été observée dans la zone de la colonie de sternes, Bird Island, le 25 mars 2005, où une bécassine non identifiée (supposée être le même individu) avait été vue régulièrement depuis le 25 octobre 2004. Une femelle juvénile du Fuligule morillon *Aythya fuligula* était à la station d'épandage d'Alphonse, les 23–25 décembre 2006. Une Hirondelle paludicole *Riparia paludicola*, probablement de la sous-espèce *chinensis*, se trouvait à Anse Étoile, Mahé et l'Île Aurore le 9 décembre 2008. Ces mentions ont été acceptées par le Comité d'Homologation Seychellois comme les premières pour ces espèces pour le pays.

## Jack Snipe

On 25 March 2005, while crossing the open area used by the colony of Sooty Terns *Sterna fuscata* (not breeding at this season) on Bird Island, I flushed a bird from almost underfoot. It flew c.1 m above the grass in a straight line for c.100 m before dipping to the ground on the west side of the colony area. It was evidently a snipe from the cryptic coloration and jizz, but as I had been taken by surprise no diagnostic features were noted. When I tried to locate the bird on the ground, I flushed it again, but being better prepared I obtained reasonable views as it again flew low in a straight line for about another 100 m. During my two-day stay on Bird Island, I saw the bird several times but I was never able to observe it on the ground.

## Description and identification

A small snipe, smaller than Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*, with a straight, relatively

short bill. Dark upperparts and wings with narrow white trailing edge and very obvious yellow mantle stripes, and all-dark pointed tail. Streaked, not barred, on breast and flanks. Rounded wingtips. I could not discern any central crown-stripe when the bird flew away from me. Flight low, quite slow and weak, in a straight line, except on landing. Silent except once on take-off, when it gave a barely audibly wheeze. I concluded it was a Jack Snipe *Lymnocryptes minimus*.

The assistant manager at the local hotel, Margaret Norah, informed me that an unidentified snipe (presumably the same individual) had been seen by herself and Robbie Bresson at the tern colony on a regular basis since 25 October 2004. She described hearing it give a similar soft, quiet call on take-off.

## First accepted record

An earlier published report of this species from Seychelles, also on Bird Island, on 3 September



**Figures 1–2.** Juvenile female Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*, Alphonse Island, Seychelles, 23 December 2006 (Adrian Skerrett)

Fuligule morillon *Aythya fuligula*, femelle juvénile, Alphonse, Seychelles, 23 décembre 2006 (Adrian Skerrett)

**Figure 3.** Plain Martin / Hirondelle paludicole *Riparia paludicola*, Anse Étoile, Mahé, Seychelles, 9 December 2008 (Adrian Skerrett)

1973 (Feare & High 1973, Feare 1979) was rejected by Seychelles Bird Records Committee (SBRC) due to insufficient detail. However, it was retained on record as 'snipe sp.'. The observation reported here has been accepted by SBRC as the first record for Seychelles.

Jack Snipe breeds mainly in subarctic Scandinavia to Siberia, wintering at scattered localities across Europe, the Indian subcontinent, south-east Asia and tropical Africa north of the equator (van Gils & Wiersma 1996). It is a vagrant south to Tanzania, where there have been a few records at latitudes similar to Bird Island.

### Tufted Duck

On 23 December 2006, I located a small, brown duck on one of the sewage ponds on Alphonse Island (Figs. 1–2). The bird remained present until at least 25 December (I left the island the following morning).

#### Description and identification

A small, compact duck with a rounded head. Mainly drab brown above, with buffish fringes to feathers of upperparts, richer dull reddish-brown neck and head, and much paler whitish brown below. In flight and when stretching wings, a broad white wingbar, fading towards the outer primaries, in an otherwise dark upperwing was visible. The bill was dull blue-grey with a black tip; the legs were dark grey. The irides appeared pale brown in overcast conditions, but yellowish in bright light. Identified and sexed as a female Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula* on its brown coloration and aged as a juvenile based on the absence of any discernible crest, only a trace of a pale area at the base of the bill, compared to the obvious white patch of an adult female, and the rather scruffy, scalloped appearance.

#### First accepted record

The record has been accepted by SBRC as the first confirmed record of Tufted Duck for Seychelles. There is an earlier published reference to this species in Seychelles, listed in an addendum as a second-hand report (Feare & Watson 1984). SBRC attempted without success to trace the observer for supporting details, making it impossible to consider the authenticity of the report. The only other *Aythya* recorded in Seychelles is

Ferruginous Duck *A. nyroca*, with five records confirmed by SBRC.

Tufted Duck breeds across the northern Palearctic from Iceland east to Kamchatka and south to central Europe, northern Mongolia and northern Japan; it is mainly migratory, although resident in some areas including much of northwest Europe, wintering south to the Mediterranean basin, southern Asia and Africa mainly north of the equator; it is a vagrant south to Tanzania and Malawi (Carboneras 1992).

### Plain Martin

Driving north from Victoria, Mahé, along the east coast around 17.30 hrs on 9 December 2008, I stopped at Anse Etoile to observe some Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters *Merops persicus*, which had been present on several Seychelles islands since late November. Numbers in north-east Mahé had increased from six during the preceding week to 30 on this date. Several bee-eaters were perched on wires and I noticed a martin perched close by and watched it through binoculars. My first impression was that it was similar to a Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*, but more grey-brown and it lacked a breast-band. I took a single photograph (Fig. 3) before the bird flew away, quite low (3–5 m) over the water, apparently hawking for insects, to Île Aurore, a reclaimed island c.100 m distant that cannot be reached on foot, where it appeared to land in some *Casuarina* trees. I continued around the corner to count bee-eaters and when I returned the martin was back perched on the wires. After a few minutes it took off once more, hawking for insects low over the water to Île Aurore. The following day it could not be found (all of the bee-eaters had also departed).

#### Description and identification

Size and general appearance similar to Sand Martin, but duller and darker, lacking a white throat and a dark breast-band. Grey-brown head, cheeks and throat, with dark brown lores and faint pale supercilium. Uniform dull dark brown on back, upperwings and uppertail with darker brown flight feathers. Belly and undertail-coverts off-white. Some indistinct greyish streaking on flanks. Flight rather slow for a hirundine, stiff-winged and fluttering, with twists and turns recalling Seychelles Swiftlet *Aerodramus elaphrus*.

In flight, long pointed wings, shallow tail fork and a grey-brown underwing.

### First accepted record

The record was accepted as the first Plain Martin *R. paludicola* for Seychelles by SBRC. To identify the subspecies, members of SBRC checked the photograph and description against specimens at The Natural History Museum, Tring. Nine subspecies of Plain Martin are recognised, six of which breed in mainland Africa, one in Madagascar and two in southern Asia (Turner 2004). Of the African subspecies, only the partial migrant *R. p. paludicola* of eastern and southern Africa might be considered likely to reach Seychelles. The Madagascar subspecies *R. p. cowani* is a potential vagrant to Seychelles. *R. p. chinensis*, breeding from Afghanistan east to Indochina and Taiwan is a migrant in the north of its range and also a potential vagrant to Seychelles.

The Seychelles bird closely resembled the Asian race *R. p. chinensis*, which has extensive white underparts. *R. p. cowani*, which has all-dark underparts, was easily eliminated. *R. p. paludicola* has white underparts, but less extensive than shown in the photograph, even in the most extreme examples held at Tring. However, given the degree of variability, it was considered that it could not be ruled out entirely. SBRC noted that an Asian origin was probable given the influx of Eurasian migrants to Seychelles at this same time, including unusually large numbers of Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters, with which the Plain Martin was associated. The Seychelles bird was therefore

considered to be probably *R. p. chinensis*, but with the proviso that other races, notably *R. p. paludicola*, could not be ruled out. There are no other reports of this subspecies in the African region, nor any south of the equator.

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## Salvin's Albatross *Thalassarche salvini* on Gough Island, South Atlantic

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**Un Albatros de Salvin** *Thalassarche salvini* à l'Île de Gough, Atlantique sud. Un Albatros de Salvin *Thalassarche salvini* adulte a été observé à Richmond Hill, Île de Gough, le 21 octobre 2008. Ceci constitue la première mention pour l'Atlantique Sud central.

On 21 October 2008 an adult Salvin's Albatross *Thalassarche salvini* was observed at Richmond Hill, Gough Island, in the central South Atlantic (Figs. 1–2). It was loafing next to

an incubating Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross *T. chlororhynchos*. The bulk of the population of *T. salvini* breeds on the Bounty and Snares, two of New Zealand's subantarctic island groups, but a



**Figure 1.** Adult Salvin's Albatross *Thalassarche salvini* with an Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross *T. chlororhynchos*, Gough Island, South Atlantic, 21 October 2008 (Paul Visser)

Albatros de Salvin *Thalassarche salvini* adulte avec un Albatros à bec jaune *T. chlororhynchos*, île de Gough, Atlantique du sud, 21 octobre 2008 (Paul Visser)



**Figure 2.** Adult Salvin's Albatross *Thalassarche salvini*, showing the diagnostic grey head and dark tip to the lower mandible, Gough Island, South Atlantic, 21 October 2008 (Paul Visser)

Albatros de Salvin *Thalassarche salvini* adulte, île de Gough, Atlantique du sud, 21 octobre 2008 (Paul Visser). Noter la tête grise et la pointe foncée de la mandibule inférieure, qui sont diagnostiques.

few pairs also nest on Île des Pingouins, in the Crozet archipelago, in the south-west Indian Ocean (Brooke 2004). Non-breeding birds typically disperse from New Zealand across the South Pacific to the west coast of South America (Brooke 2004), with a few birds dispersing as far as the Drake Passage and south-west Atlantic, apparently after rounding Cape Horn (Tickell 2000). One was recently observed ashore at the Diego Ramírez Islands, south of Cape Horn (Arata 2003) and there is a recent record from the Patagonian Shelf (Seco Pon *et al.* 2007). *Contra* to early reports (e.g. Harrison 1983), it is a rare vagrant to southern African waters, with only a few sightings from the Western Cape, South Africa (Hockey *et al.* 2005). Salvin's Albatross is part of the Shy Albatross *T. cauta* (*sensu lato*) species complex. Shy Albatrosses occur occasionally in the waters off Tristan (Ryan 2007), but this is the first record of a Salvin's Albatross for the central South Atlantic.

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# Second record of Wattled Starling *Creatophora cinerea* in Madagascar

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## Deuxième observation de l'Etourneau caronculé *Creatophora cinerea* à Madagascar.

La présente note rapporte l'observation le 18 octobre 2008 de deux Etourneaux caronculés *Creatophora cinerea* dans le sud-ouest de Madagascar. Cette espèce distribuée principalement en Afrique australe et orientale est connue pour son comportement erratique. Il s'agit de la deuxième observation de cette espèce à Madagascar depuis la première réalisée en 1989, également dans le sud-ouest de l'île.

On 18 October 2008, we were birding in south-west Madagascar around Hotel Salary Bay ( $22^{\circ}33'S$   $43^{\circ}17'E$ ) on the coast halfway between Toliara and Morombe. The most dominant habitat there is dry spiny forest thicket dominated by Didieraceae and arborescent euphorbs such as *Euphorbia enterophora* (Euphorbiaceae) (Moat & Smith 2007) growing on deep sandy soil. The weather conditions were excellent with a light wind and very good light. This region of Madagascar receives little rainfall, c.450 mm p.a. (Nicoll & Langrand 1989), mostly in December–February, thus at the time of observation the region was very dry with little fresh water available to birds.

Between 16.30 and 18.00 hrs we were observing birds 6 km north of Salary Bay, where a permanent water source was attracting birds just 400 m from the coast. The spring is surrounded by a reedbed *Phragmites mauritianus* with a larger area of grasses (Gramineae), *Salicornia pachystachia*

and scattered bushes of *Cryptostegia grandiflora*, which is certainly flooded seasonally, extending north for c.800 m. The east side of the dry lake is bordered by dry spiny forest thicket dominated by trees such as *Tamarindus indica*, *Didiera madagascariensis*, *Ficus* sp., *Commiphora* spp., and *Adansonia za*. The waterhole was visited by various birds including Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis*, Grey-headed Lovebird *Agapornis canus*, Malagasy Turtle Dove *Streptopelia picturata* and Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis*, the most numerous of which was the first-named. As we were observing a small group of six Common Mynas perched on a *Cryptostegia grandiflora* we noticed two smaller starlings perched with them. The plumage of these two smaller individuals was dull greyish brown with darker wings, very conspicuous whitish uppertail-coverts and a small but characteristic bare patch behind the eye. As we both have extensive experience of African birds, we



**Figure 1.** Wattled Starlings *Creatophora cinerea*, 6 km north of Salary Bay, south-west Madagascar, 18 October 2008 (Matthias von Bechtolsheim)

Etourneaux caronculés *Creatophora cinerea*, 6 km au nord de la Baie de Salary, Madagascar du sud-ouest, 18 octobre 2008 (Matthias von Bechtolsheim)

easily identified them as adult Wattled Starlings *Creatophora cinerea* in non-breeding plumage (Fig. 1). The Wattled Starlings remained in the vicinity of the water for c.30 minutes, moving from the bush to a large tree at the edge of the dry lake, waiting with a group of 30 Common Mynas for the opportunity to drink.

Wattled Starling is widespread in southern and eastern sub-Saharan Africa and is a highly nomadic and gregarious species that usually feeds in dry grassy savannah, on locusts (Fry *et al.* 2000). It moves widely in the non-breeding season, when it has also been recorded in Central and West Africa (Borrow & Demey 2001), and even as far afield as Yemen and Oman in the Middle East (Porter *et al.* 1996, Eriksen *et al.* 2003), and in Seychelles, where long-staying birds have been reported from Bird Island and Aldabra (Skerrett & Bullock 2001). On Seychelles, three records have been accepted by the Seychelles Bird Records Committee, one from Bird Island, in July 1995–February 1996, and two from Aldabra, with up to 14 birds there in September 1999–June 2000 (Skerrett *et al.* 2006, 2007). On Europa Atoll, off south-west Madagascar, there is a record of three birds in May 1994 (Le Corre & Probst 1997).

Wattled Starling is also an exceptional vagrant to Madagascar, where the first sighting was reported by Alec Forbes-Watson, near Manombo, 48 km north of Toliara, on 21 November 1989, when eight individuals in non-breeding plumage were observed (Langrand & Sinclair 1994). The 1989 sighting was made 50 km south of Salary Bay, where the second record, reported here, was made. The grass-covered surroundings of dry lakes are common along the coast between Toliara and Morondava, and probably constitute suitable habitat for any Wattled Starlings that accidentally reach Madagascar.

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# First record of Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos* for Cameroon

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**Première mention du Bécasseau tacheté *Calidris melanotos* pour le Cameroun.** Le 8 mars 2009, un Bécasseau tacheté *Calidris melanotos* a été découvert sur un banc de sable dans le Sanaga (03°46'N 10°03'E), près d'Edea, Cameroun. Ceci constitue la première donnée pour le pays de cette espèce, qui est occasionnelle en Afrique de l'Ouest et a notamment été observée au Nigeria et au Gabon, pays limitrophes.

**O**n 8 March 2009, together with eight other participants of a bird tour, we were observing birds along the lower Sanaga River (03°46'N 10°03'E), near Edea in Cameroon. Several shorebirds, such as Grey Pratincole *Glareola cinerea*, White-fronted Plover *Charadrius marginatus*, Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*, Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucus* and Little Stint *Calidris minuta*, were observed feeding on a large sandbar in the river, c.200 m from the north bank, where we were positioned. SC observed a medium-sized sandpiper with yellowish legs, mid-length, down-curved bill and a very heavily streaked breast clearly demarcated from the white belly. He immediately alerted the group's attention to the probability of the bird being a Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos*. We observed the bird through telescopes for c.5 minutes as it fed along the water's edge. During this time it appeared unsettled and repeatedly took flight, eventually travelling a total distance of c.50 m along the sandbar. In flight the upperwing was seen to be uniform in colour, with no obvious pale wingbar or other features.

This combination of features led us to confirm the bird's identity as a Pectoral Sandpiper, the first record for Cameroon (Borrow & Demey 2004; African Bird Club checklists database *per J. Caddick pers. comm.*). A distant but diagnostic digiscoped photograph was taken, but is of insufficient quality to be published. Pectoral Sandpiper breeds in north-east Russia, northern Alaska and northern Canada, and winters in Australia, New Zealand and South America (Cramp & Simmons 1983). The species occurs widely as a vagrant and there are several previous records from West

Africa, including in neighbouring Gabon (Borrow & Demey 2004) and Nigeria (G. Hak *in Bull. ABC* 15: 134), making the present record far from unexpected.

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# First record of Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris* for Namibia

Josh Engel

**Première mention du Bécasseau de l'Anadyr *Calidris tenuirostris* pour la Namibie.** Un Bécasseau de l'Anadyr *Calidris tenuirostris* a été observé et photographié sur la lagune de Walvis Bay, en Namibie, le 24 novembre 2008. Ceci constitue la première donnée pour le pays. L'aire d'hivernage de cette espèce, qui niche au nord-est de la Sibérie, s'étend de l'Australasie jusqu'au Pakistan. En Afrique, des occasionnels ont été notés au Maroc (un individu en août 1980), au Mozambique (un en décembre 2004 ; trois en septembre 2008) et sur la côte ouest de l'Afrique du Sud (un, supposé être le même individu, en quatre saisons consécutives en 2000–03).

**O**n the afternoon of 24 November 2008, I was birding with my tour group at the Walvis Bay Lagoon on the central Namibian coast. The lagoon's shoreline was full of waders on the outgoing tide, with large numbers of Little Stints *Calidris minuta*, Curlew Sandpipers *C. ferruginea* and Sanderlings *C. alba* on the exposed mudflats. Larger waders were slightly further out, at the tide-line, including many Bar-tailed Godwits *Limosa lapponica* and Whimbrels *Numenius phaeopus*.

As I was scanning the flocks, I picked out a different-looking wader amongst the Bar-tailed Godwits. It was far smaller than the godwits, but larger than the *Calidris* sandpipers, with a fairly long, hefty, slightly decurved bill (Figs. 1–2). I immediately recognised it as a Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris*, a species I am familiar with from having observed thousands and ringed hundreds in

Australia. Whilst superficially similar to Red Knot *C. canutus*, Great Knot is a larger bird, with a longer bill, a less contrasting facial pattern and a white rump, seen while the bird bathed.

We watched and photographed the bird for the next 30 minutes at a distance of c.40 m. At one point it took off with a group of other waders, but we quickly relocated it. While it was originally feeding with the larger waders, after it flew it joined the smaller species. It also bathed, preened and rested during our brief period of observation. Unfortunately I was unable to age the bird in the field and the photographs are inconclusive.

Great Knot is largely restricted to the East Asian-Australasian flyway, breeding in northern Siberia and spending the non-breeding season as far west as coastal Pakistan (Hayman *et al.* 1986). It is now known to winter as far west as the east and south-east coasts of the Arabian Peninsula (Aspinall 1994, Green *et al.* 1994).

Whilst Great Knot was first recorded on the African continent in Morocco in August 1980 (Lister 1981), it has only been recorded in sub-Saharan Africa in the last decade (Cohen & Winter 2003). The Walvis Bay bird represents the first record for Namibia. Hockey *et al.* (2005) list only one record for southern Africa, of an adult, presumably the same individual, that returned to West Coast National Park, Western Cape, South Africa, for four consecutive summers in 2000–2003. There are two subsequent records from the southern Africa sub-region, both from the Barra Peninsula, near Inhambane, Mozambique: a single in December 2004 and three individuals in September 2008 (M. Booysen in Bull. ABC 16: 107).



**Figures 1–2.** Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris* with Bar-tailed Godwits *Limosa lapponica*, Curlew Sandpipers *C. ferruginea* and Sanderlings *C. alba*, Walvis Bay, Namibia, 24 November 2008 (Josh Engel)

Bécasseau de l'Anadyr *Calidris tenuirostris* avec Barges rousses *Limosa lapponica*, Bécasseaux cocorlis *C. ferruginea* et Bécasseaux sanderlings *C. alba*, Walvis Bay, Namibie, 24 novembre 2008 (Josh Engel)

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## Sightings of Kelp Gull *Larus dominicanus* in the Tsiribihina Delta, west-central Madagascar

Felix Razafindrajao

**Observations du Goéland dominicain *Larus dominicanus* dans le delta du Tsiribihina, au centre-ouest de Madagascar.** Lors des dénombrements d'oiseaux d'eau dans le delta du fleuve Tsiribihina, cinq Goélards dominicains *Larus dominicanus* ont été observés en mars 2006, quatre en juillet 2006 et cinq en mars 2007. Auparavant, cette espèce n'avait été observée à Madagascar que dans les zones humides côtières entre Toliara, 430 km au sud du delta du Tsiribihina, et Fort Dauphin (Tolagnaro).

During waterbird population surveys in the Tsiribihina Delta, west-central Madagascar, in 2006–07, several Kelp Gulls *Larus dominicanus* were observed by the Madagascar Teal Project team of the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust Madagascar Programme. Two were at Soarano ( $19^{\circ}38'S$   $44^{\circ}23'E$ ) on 19 March 2006, three at Ambozaka ( $19^{\circ}37'S$   $44^{\circ}23'E$ ) on 21 March 2006 and two in the same place on 20 and 27 July 2006—when there were another two at Namangoa Bay ( $19^{\circ}52'S$   $44^{\circ}27'E$ )—and five on 16 March 2007. All of the birds were on sandy islets, c.200–400 m offshore, and are apparently the first observations for this area.

Kelp Gull is characterised by its white head, neck, throat and tail, and black back and wings, with the exception of the white primary tips. The bill and legs are olive, and the orbital ring is red. These features were clearly observed on all of the

individuals and I am familiar with Kelp Gull at Fort Dauphin. The species is easy to distinguish from Grey-headed Gull *L. cirrocephalus*, the only other gull regularly found at Madagascar's wetlands, because of its larger size, black back, white head and throat, and yellow bill. Lesser Black-backed Gull *L. fuscus* has not been recorded in Madagascar but, with sightings in East Africa and Seychelles (Skerrett *et al.* 2001, Stevenson & Fanshawe 2002), could possibly occur. None of the birds reported had the yellow legs characteristic of Lesser Black-backed Gull, and Kelp Gull seems more likely in this area.

Kelp Gull is widespread in the Southern Hemisphere, in Africa, South America, Australasia and on many islands in the Southern Ocean (Higgins & Davies 1996). In Madagascar it is represented by the recently described endemic subspecies *melisandae*, which is restricted to south-west

coastal areas between Toliara and Fort Dauphin (Morris & Hawkins 1998), with one observation from between Manakara and Maroansetra on the east coast (Langrand 1995). Although waterbirds had been surveyed in the Tsiribihina Delta previously, Kelp Gull had never been observed there (Safford 1993, Projet ZICOMA unpubl. reports). Regular bird monitoring at the Mangoky Delta, between Toliara and the Tsiribihina, has not produced any sightings either (R. Rabarisoa, ASITY Madagascar, *in litt.* 2008). Thus, there appear to be no published records north of Toliara.

The sightings reported here increase the known range of Kelp Gull in Madagascar by 430 km to the north. It is recommended that observers look out for this species on suitable stretches of Madagascar's west coast.

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# Première mention du Traquet motteux *Oenanthe oenanthe* pour Madagascar

Paul Koenig

**First record of Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* for Madagascar.** On 26–31 December 2005, a male Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* was observed on the Anjiabe Plateau, c.7 km south-west of Antsohihy (14°53'S 47°59'E), in north-west Madagascar. This appears to be the first documented record of this Palearctic vagrant for the island.

Du 26 au 31 décembre 2005 un Traquet motteux *Oenanthe oenanthe* mâle en plumage d'éclipse a été observé sur le plateau d'Anjiabe, à environ 7 km au sud-ouest d'Antsohihy (14°53'S 47°59'E), dans le nord-ouest de Madagascar. Le plateau fait environ 2 km de long sur 500 m de large ; sa partie à l'ouest de la route Antananarivo–Antsiranana (Diégo-Suarez) est semi-désertique et parsemée de rares arbustes, des jujubiers *Ziziphus jujuba* et des palmiers nains *Hyphaene* sp.

Le traquet présentait les caractéristiques d'un mâle adulte en plumage intermédiaire : la tâche noire traversant l'œil, bordée d'un sourcil blanc peu marqué, était encore bien visible (ce masque foncé est absent chez le Traquet isabelle *O. isabellina*). Le dessus était plutôt brunâtre que gris. Le croupion était blanc pur et la queue typique du traquet avec les rectrices externes blanches sur deux tiers de leur longueur et les centrales entièrement noires. Le dessous était gris très clair. Les pattes étaient noires, tout comme le bec. Le comportement de l'oiseau était typique de l'espèce, avec de petits sauts de tertres en tertres afin de se nourrir au sol. De nombreuses petites termitières de 20–40 cm de haut lui servaient dans ses déplacements. Assez farouche, l'oiseau se déplaçait facilement de 500–700 m à l'approche de gens fréquentant la route. De plus il était souvent dérangé par des troupeaux de zébus. Observé d'abord durant trois jours de suite, le traquet a ensuite disparu pendant deux jours. Il a été revu pour la dernière fois le 31 décembre. Sa disparition coïncidait avec l'arrivée, du sud-est, d'une dépression tropicale à fortes précipitations. J'ai eu le loisir d'observer l'espèce en de nombreuses occasions en Europe de l'Ouest, surtout lors des passages migratoires, ce qui écarte toute confusion possible sur le plan de l'identification de cette espèce.

Le Traquet motteux niche dans un cercle de largeur variable dans l'hémisphère nord, de l'Europe et l'Afrique du Nord à travers l'Asie, jusqu'en Amérique du Nord et le Groenland. En

période hivernale toutes les populations rejoignent l'Afrique équatoriale (Géroudet 1998). L'espèce est signalée comme occasionnelle aux Seychelles, principalement dans le groupe d'Aldabra (Sinclair & Langrand 1998, Skerrett *et al.* 2001). Pour Madagascar, elle n'est citée ni par Langrand (1995), ni par Morris & Hawkins (1998). Selon Sinclair & Langrand (1998), le Traquet motteux est à considérer comme un visiteur rare à Madagascar. Une observation à une date inconnue dans le nord a été rapportée sans pour autant être confirmée (D. Halleux *in litt.* 2008, O. Langrand *in litt.* 2008). L'observation rapportée ici est ainsi la première publiée pour l'île. Très peu de passereaux paléarctiques ont été signalés à Madagascar : seuls l'Hirondelle des rivages *Riparia riparia*, l'Hirondelle rustique *Hirundo rustica* et le Loriot d'Europe *Oriolus oriolus* semblent être dans ce cas (Langrand 1995, Morris & Hawkins 1998).

## Remerciements

Je remercie Olivier Langrand et Roger Safford pour leurs commentaires constructifs et Dominique Halleux pour m'avoir fourni les détails concernant l'observation non confirmée d'un traquet dans le nord de Madagascar.

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## Photospot:

# Buff-spotted Flufftail *Sarothrura elegans* with chicks

Pete Leonard<sup>a</sup> and Hugh Chittenden<sup>b</sup>

**Un Râle ponctué *Sarothrura elegans* avec ses poussins.** Le Râle ponctué *Sarothrura elegans* est un petit rallidé dissimulé qui occupe un large éventail d'habitats, de la forêt dense humide aux forêts galeries. Il est connu de localités éparses de la Sierra Leone au Ghana et du Nigeria à l'Éthiopie et l'Afrique du Sud. Certaines observations indiquent qu'au moins une partie de la population est migratrice. Les poussins, dont des photos sont présentées ici, ont rarement, ou peut-être jamais, été photographiés auparavant.

The Buff-spotted Flufftail *Sarothrura elegans* occurs in a wide variety of dense habitats ranging from extensive rainforest (where it tends to prefer edges) to narrow strips of riparian undergrowth. It even inhabits relatively small patches of deciduous thicket when these are in leaf, although in such localities it appears to occur only seasonally. It is known from scattered localities from Sierra Leone to Ghana, and Nigeria to Angola east to Ethiopia, and south to eastern and southern South Africa (Borrow & Demey 2001, Taylor 2005, Dowsett *et al.* 2008). There are several isolated records of apparent vagrants (e.g. in Somalia and Namibia), some of which involve birds attracted to lights at night (Keith 1986, Taylor & van Perlo 1998) and this too supports the suggestion that at least some birds undertake movements. Although secretive, this flufftail is relatively well known; information was summarised by Taylor & van Perlo (1998), from which most data presented below have been taken.

The downy young have rarely, if ever, been photographed before. As with all flufftail *Sarothrura* chicks, they are black. Chicks leave the nest when 1–2 days old and their remiges begin to grow at 6–7 days, so the chicks in the photographs must be no more than 3–5 days old (Figs. 1–4). Families visit water sources together at least once a day, usually in the late afternoon or evening, when they drink and bathe (Fig. 2). Taylor & van Perlo (1998) mention that chicks bathe regularly from ten days old, but as can be seen in Figs. 3–4, they will do so at an even earlier age. Chicks will wet

themselves extensively not only to wash, but also to keep cool. They are not only brooded by the female (Taylor & van Perlo 1998), but also by the male, as shown in Fig. 5. They can jump and run strongly from 3–4 days and will begin to forage at a similar age, but are fed by both parents until their independence at c.3 weeks.

### Photographer's note

These birds were attracted to a garden with a shallow bird bath sunk into the ground near dense cover. The sides were built sloping gently so that the water margins were only 1–2 cm deep. Because birds require a quick escape route into cover some dead branches and other plant debris were added alongside the water.

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Figure 1. ♂♂ de la famille des Gallinacés, le mâle adulte avec poussin sortant du bain (Hugh Chittenden)

Figure 2. Jeune poussin d'adulte *Sarothrura elegans* dans l'eau peu profonde (Hugh Chittenden)

Figure 3. Jeune poussin d'adulte *Sarothrura elegans* s'aventurant en eau peu profonde (Hugh Chittenden)

Figures 3-4. Jeune poussin d'adulte *Sarothrura elegans* chick cooling off following its evening toilet (Hugh Chittenden)

Figure 4. Jeune poussin d'adulte se reposant après la toilette du soir (Hugh Chittenden)

Figure 5. Jeune poussin d'adulte *Sarothrura elegans* brooding chicks beside a shallow pool (Hugh Chittenden)

Figure 5. Jeune poussin d'adulte couvant ses poussins à côté d'une flaque d'eau (Hugh Chittenden)

# Recent Reports



These are largely unconfirmed records published for interest only; **records are mostly from late 2008 and early 2009, with a few from earlier dates.** We thank all birders who have sent in their records and urge them to submit full details to the relevant national or regional organisations. It is suggested that observations of each species be compared with relevant literature to set new data in context and that observers who are unfamiliar with the status of birds in a particular country refer to R. J. Dowsett's (1993) Afrotropical avifaunas: annotated country checklists (in R. J. Dowsett & F.

Dowsett-Lemaire. *A Contribution to the Distribution and Taxonomy of Afrotropical and Malagasy Birds.* Tauraco Res. Rep. 5. Liège: Tauraco Press) or more recent or appropriate sources before submitting records.

• • • • •

Les observations ci-après sont en majeure partie non confirmées et sont publiées uniquement dans le but d'informer. **La plupart des données sont de fin 2007 et début 2009 ; quelques-unes sont plus anciennes.** Nous remercions tous les ornithologues qui ont pris la peine de nous faire parvenir leurs

données et nous recommandons de les envoyer, dûment documentées, aux organisations nationales ou régionales concernées. Il est conseillé de vérifier le statut des espèces observées dans la littérature appropriée, afin de mettre les nouvelles données en perspective, et de consulter notamment R. J. Dowsett (1993) Afrotropical avifaunas: annotated country checklists (in R. J. Dowsett & F. Dowsett-Lemaire. *A Contribution to the Distribution and Taxonomy of Afrotropical and Malagasy Birds.* Tauraco Res. Rep. 5. Liège : Tauraco Press) ou des sources plus récentes ou appropriées.

## Angola

During a visit to some sites in Huambo province in November 2008, **White-fronted Wattled-eye Platysteira albifrons** and two groups of **Gabela Helmetshrikes Prionops gabela** were observed in the Bimbo area on 7th–8th. On Mt Moco, on 11th–13th, two groups of **Swierstra's Francolin Francolinus swierstrai**, **Laura's Woodland Warbler Phylloscopus laurae** and several **Angola Slaty Flycatchers Melaenornis brunneus** were noted, and on 14th **Bocage's Sunbird Nectarinia bocagii** was recorded in the Galanga area (MM).

The following were reported in January 2009. In the Lubango area, on 7th–18th: **Red-capped Crombec Sylvietta ruficapilla**, **Angola Slaty Flycatcher**, **Damara Rockjumper** (Rockrunner) *Chaetops pycnopygius*, **Pied Flycatcher Ficedula hypoleuca** (Dean 2000, *The Birds of Angola*, mentions only a single possible record, from Cabinda), **Oustalet's Sunbird Cinnyris oustaleti** and **Perrin's Bushshrike Malaconotus viridis**.

In Iona National Park, in the extreme south-west, at the border with Namibia, **Ludwig's Bustard Neotis ludwigii**, **Burchell's Courser Cursorius rufus**, **Fawn-coloured Lark Mirafra africanaoides**, **Stark's Lark Eremalauda starki**, **Benguella Long-billed Lark Certhilauda benguelensis** (particularly common) and **Gray's Lark Ammomanes grayi** were observed on 19th–22nd. East of Lubango, **Rufous-bellied Heron Ardeola rufiventris**, **White-backed Duck Thallasornis leuconotus** and **Cuckoo Finch Anomalospiza imberbis** were seen in Bicuari National Park on 24th–25th (MM).

At Baia dos Tigres, **Greater Crested (Swift) Tern Sternbergii** and breeding **Damara Tern S. balaenarum** were recorded on 24th–25th (RS).

## Azores

The following records are from January–May 2009 (with one from November 2008). The second **Black-capped Petrel Pterodroma hasitata** for the Azores was photographed 5–6 nautical miles south of Queimada, Pico, on 22 May. The first **Pied-**

**billed Grebe Podilymbus podiceps** for the islands was at Lagoa das Furnas, São Miguel, from 9 November until 17 May at least. **Cattle Egrets Bubulcus ibis** were reported from Paul da Praia, Terceira (up to seven, January–April), Faja de Cima, São Miguel (up to 25, January–May), and Santa Maria (two, 11 January). Two **American Great Egrets Egretta alba egretta** remained until at least 2 May on Terceira (from December 2008). One was on Corvo from 18 February and on 6 May, and one on São Miguel on 3 and 26 April; other Great Egrets in February were on São Miguel and on Santa Maria. At least 19 American Great Egrets have been reported in the Azores to date; the eighth, from 7 November 2005 to 14 January 2006, had been ringed as a nestling in Ontario, Canada, on 27 June 2005.

A **Barnacle Goose Branta leucopsis** stayed at Ponta Delgada on 3–19 May and a **White-fronted Goose Anser albifrons** was still at Vila harbour pool, Santa Maria, on 18 May. A male **Mandarin Duck Aix galericulata** (apparently only the third for the archipelago), found between

Tauromachy and Lagoa das Patas, Terceira, in March, was joined by a female on 24 April; they were still present on 6 May. A **Blue-winged Teal** *Anas discors* was at Faja dos Cubres on 4 April. A first-year male **Red Kite** *Milvus milvus* ringed and wing-tagged at Marybank, Scotland, on 1 July 2008 was photographed on Corvo on 3 November 2008. On São Miguel, a **Little Crake** *Porzana parva* was seen at Lagoa das Furnas on 22 May and an **American Coot** *Fulica americana* remained at Lagoa Azul from 2 December to at least mid January.

Two **Semipalmated Plovers** *Charadrius semipalmatus* wintered at Cabo da Praia, Terceira. An **American Golden Plover** *Pluvialis dominica* was found in the company of four Golden Plovers *P. apricaria* at Achada das Furnas, São Miguel, on 5 February. **Spotted Sandpipers** *Actitis macularius* were noted at Praia da Vitoria, Terceira, from 4 February until at least April, and at Madalena, Pico, on 3 April. A **Red Phalarope** *Phalaropus fulicarius* was on Pico on 7 January, with another at Mosteiros, São Miguel, on 2–4 January.

A **Bonaparte's Gull** *Larus philadelphia* was seen at Ponta Delgada, São Miguel, from 15 March. By early March, 9–10 **Iceland Gulls** *L. glaucopterus*, four **Kumlien's Gulls** *L. g. kumlieni* and 18–19 **Glaucous Gulls** *L. hyperboreus* had been counted in the Azores.

Two **Sooty Terns** *Sterna fuscata* were seen on Ilhéu da Vila, Santa Maria, on 3 May and a **Bridled Tern** *S. anaethetus* was on Ilhéu de Santo António, Pico, on 24 April and at Farol da Manhenha on 26 May. Two dead **Little Auks** *Alle alle* were found at Porto Pim, Faial, on 1 February.

The second **Snowy Owl** *Bubo scandiacus* for the archipelago was a female photographed at Lagoa Branca, Flores, on 17 February (the first was on Faial on 12–14 January 1928). A **Common Kingfisher** *Alcedo atthis* at Vila do Porto, Santa Maria, on 27–28 February was the first for the Azores. Thirty **Fieldfares** *Turdus pilaris* were observed on Santa Maria on 11 January (per *Dutch Birding* 31: 50–55, 125–128, 190–

192; *Birding World* 22: 13, 55–56, 106, 199).

### Benin

Observations in the forest remnants of the south, from 20 January to 2 March 2009, with also a few days in Ouari Maro Forest Reserve, near Bétérou, in the north, produced many records of species new for the country or very rarely reported previously: **White-crested Tiger Heron** *Tigrornis leucocephala* (two heard at dawn in Lokoli swamp forest), **Long-tailed Hawk** *Urotriorchis macrourus* (one, probably a vagrant, wandering through Lokoli swamp forest; tape-recorded), **Crowned Eagle** *Stephanoaetus coronatus* (a wanderer calling over Lama forest is a first record for the area), **Cassin's Hawk Eagle** *Hieraetust africanus* (one calling over Lama), **Black-throated Coucal** *Centropus leucogaster* (common everywhere in forest; surprisingly hitherto overlooked), **Vermiculated Fishing Owl** *Scotopelia bouvieri* (at least four heard and tape-recorded in Lokoli swamp forest), **Hairy-breasted Barbet** *Tricholaema hirsuta* (a small population in Lokoli swamp forest and also in Pobè; tape-recorded), **Willcocks's Honeyguide** *Indicator willcocksi* (seen in Niaouli and also observed in riparian forest in Ouari Maro, where tape-recorded), **Green-backed Woodpecker** *Campetherab cailliautii* (in Lokoli swamp forest; tape-recorded), **Baumann's Greenbul** *Phyllastrephus baumanni* (a large population discovered in thickets in Lama forest; mist-netted and tape-recorded), **Finsch's Flycatcher Thrush** *Stizorhina finschi* (rare in Lokoli, where tape-recorded), **Red-cheeked Wattle-eye** *Dyaphorophyia blissetti* (locally common in thickets in Lama forest; mist-netted and tape-recorded), **Little Green Sunbird** *Anthreptes seimundi* (several seen at close range on *Combretum* flowers at Niaouli), **Tiny Sunbird** *Cinnyris minutus* (several singing and tape-recorded in Pobè forest), **Pale-fronted Negrofinch** *Nigritta luteifrons* (seen and tape-recorded in *Elaeis* palms and forest at Pobè).

### Yellow-throated Tinkerbird

*Pogoniulus subsulphureus* appeared to be the common forest tinkerbird in Niaouli, not Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird *P. bilineatus* as previously reported (*P. subsulphureus* was also heard in Pobè, where rare). The observers were able to confirm **Purple-headed Glossy Starling** *Lamprotornis purpureiceps* from Lama (where rare) and especially from Lokoli, where small flocks (tape-recorded) were feeding on figs. The common forest oriole is **Black-winged Oriole** *Oriolus nigripennis* (especially common in Niaouli, Lokoli and Pobè, where many were seen and tape-recorded), not Western Black-headed *O. brachyrhynchus*, as previously reported (this species is apparently absent). Also of interest are a **Little Grebe** *Tachybaptus ruficollis* on a lagoon west of Cotonou, **Greater Swamp Warblers** *Acrocephalus rufescens* heard in *Typha* and mangrove near Ouidah and Cotonou, where **Little Weavers** *Ploceus pelzelni* were also seen (in swamps), and **Zebra Waxbills** *Amandava subflava* encountered in grassland near Lokoli. In the north, **Rufous Cisticola** *Cisticola rufus*, watched at close range in woodland at Ouari Maro, near Agbassa, is possibly the first record for the country. Whilst the forest remnants at Niaouli, Pobè and especially the larger Lama forest are well protected, the swamp forest at Lokoli is being cut down for gardens, and the future of several bird species in Benin confined to Lokoli, such as Vermiculated Fishing Owl and also **Western Bearded Greenbul** *Criniger barbatus*, is very uncertain (FD-L & RJD).

### Botswana

The following records are from February–May 2009. In south-east Botswana, three **Black-necked Grebes** *Podiceps nigricollis* were seen at Kgoro Pan on 15 February. Five **Macqua Ducks** *Oxyura macqua* were observed at Gamoleele Dam on 17 January, six at Moshupa Dam on 25 January, one at Hildavale, south of Lobatse, on 15 February and three at Kgoro Pan on the same date (CB). A pair of **South African**

**Shelducks** *Tadorna cana* and a single **White Stork** *Ciconia ciconia* overwintered at a pan within Khama Rhino Sanctuary and a group of 100 **Red-billed Oxpeckers** *Buphagus erythrorhynchus* at Segakwana, near Modipe, north-east of Gaborone, were of note (IW).

Raptors included a **European Honey Buzzard** *Pernis apivorus* at Nogtware, near Gaborone, on 12 April (AH, HH), two **Lappet-faced Vultures** *Torgos tracheliotus* at Kgoro Pan on 15 February (CB) and three at Tau Pan, in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve, on 3 March (GS), with a pair nesting east of Deception Valley, Central Kalahari Game Reserve (GH), and three at a road kill just south of Ghanzi on 28 May (BB, DB). A pair of **Western Banded Snake Eagles** *Circaetus cinerascens* was seen on three occasions near Seronga in April–May (GMC).

About 60 **Wattled Cranes** *Bugeranus carunculatus* were counted on the Boro floodplain in the Okavango, near the buffalo fence, on 30 May (BB, DB). Four **Pectoral Sandpipers** *Calidris melanotos*, observed at Lake Ngami on 14 February, stayed until at least 19th. In mid January, a **Terek Sandpiper** *Xenus cinereus* was reported from near Xakanaxa, Moremi. A **Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa* was seen on an open pan c.2 km from Kwetsani Camp, in the Okavango, on 23 March and a **Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus* c.20 km south of Kasane on 26 February (per TH). On 12 April, a **Lesser Yellowlegs** *T. flavipes* was photographed in Moremi Game Reserve (GH; Fig. 1); this is the first record for Botswana and only the fifth for southern Africa. Records of **European Rollers** *Coracias garrulus* included c.17 along the Nata–Maun road in mid February (MB), four along the A1 north of Artesia and four at Marakalo Ranch in late March (CB).

## Cameroon

Noteworthy records from November 2008–June 2009 include the following. In Nki National Park, south-east Cameroon, a **Goliath Heron** *Ardea goliath* was photographed at a bai

(a swampy forest clearing) in early June. Also there was a **Little Bittern** *Ixobrychus minutus*. Both species are rare in this part of the country and these are apparently the first records for this site (JvdW). During a visit to Ngaoundaba on 16–17 March, an **Ovambo Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter ovampensis* was photographed (AD) and a **Brown-chested Lapwing** *Vanellus superciliosus* seen (MM). **White-throated Francolin** *Francolinus albogularis* was found in the Bénoué on 14–15 March (MM).

## A Black headed Bee-eater

*Merops breweri* was discovered near the Djembe field base in Lobéké National Park on 24 April, and a pair was observed in the same area on 6 June; this is an addition to the Cameroon list (MK). A pair of **Brown Sunbirds** *Anthreptes gabonicus* was foraging along the Djerem River at Myere, at the edge of Mbam and Djerem National Park in central Cameroon, on 2 November 2008; on 8 April 2009 one was photographed (RF); this species has not been found so far inland previously. In the north, **Emin's Shrikes** *Lanius gubernator* were observed at Poli, on 13 March, and in the Bénoué the next day (MM). Also at Poli, on 13 March, the recently 'rediscovered' **Chad Firefinch** *Lagonosticta umbrinodorsalis* (see Bull. ABC 15: 238–241) was seen again, with the second **Ortolan Bunting** *Emberiza hortulana* for Cameroon also there (the first being from 30 January 2001; see Bull. ABC 14: 56) (MM).

## Canary Islands

Records from January–May 2009 include the following. A **Northern Fulmar** *Fulmarus glacialis* was found dead on Lanzarote on 11 March (per Dutch Birding 31: 122). Up to three **Red-billed Tropicbirds** *Phaethon aethereus* were photographed at close range near Puerto del Carmen, Lanzarote, between 26 April and 2 May (per Dutch Birding 31: 188, Birding World 22: 199). On Gran Canaria, the male **Lesser Scaup** *Aythya affinis*, first found on 19 November 2008, was still present on 14 March (per Birding World 22: 106). On the same island, **Laughing**

**Gulls** *Larus atricilla* were present on 15 February and 14 March (per Dutch Birding 31: 127). A first-winter **Sabine's Gull** *Xema sabini* was at Punta Pechiguera, Lanzarote, on 30 January (per Birding World 22: 56). A **Laughing Dove** *Streptopelia senegalensis* was seen at Haría, Lanzarote, on 2 April (DR). A **Yellow-browed Warbler** *Phylloscopus inornatus* stayed on Lanzarote on 27–30 January and another was photographed on Fuerteventura on 10 February (per Dutch Birding 31: 131).

## Cape Verde Islands

The following records are from February–March 2009. A **Sooty Shearwater** *Puffinus griseus* and an *Oceanodroma* storm-petrel were photographed at sea between Raso and São Nicolau on 24 March; the latter was subsequently confirmed to be a **Leach's Storm-petrel** *O. leucorhoa*. A male and two female **Magnificent Frigatebirds** *Fregata magnificens* were at Curral Velho, Boa Vista, on 26 March, and two **Squacco Herons** *Ardeola ralloides* at Barragem de Poilão, Santiago, on 21 March. The first **Black-headed Heron** *Ardea melanocephala* for the islands, an immature, was photographed at Barragem de Poilão on 21 March and was seen again in April. An adult male **Western Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus* flew over Curral Velho, Boa Vista, on 26 March. At Praia, Santiago, a male **Northern Wheatear** *Oenanthe oenanthe* was observed on 21 March (DM). An immature **American Purple Gallinule** *Porphyrio martinica* claimed from Liberdão, Santiago, on 26 February was still present on 18 March; this would be the first for the archipelago, if accepted (per Birding World 22: 146).

## Egypt

Records from July–December 2008 not mentioned in previous Recent Reports include the following. At Abbasa fish farms, Sharqia, c.250 **Glossy Ibises** *Plegadis falcinellus*, including some recently fledged juveniles, were observed on 11 July; breeding of this species in the area was suspected some 15 years ago.

Also recorded were up to 1,500 pairs of **Squacco Herons** *Ardeola ralloides*, several thousand **Cattle Egrets** *Bubulcus ibis* in various colonies, up to 1,000 pairs of **Little Egrets** *Egretta garzetta* in scattered nesting sites, ten **Grey Herons** *Ardea cinerea*, up to ten apparently nesting **Collared Pratincoles** *Glareola pratincola* and c.50 pairs of **Lesser Masked Weavers** *Ploceus intermedius*.

At Sharm el Sheikh sewage pools, on 27 November, the following raptors were seen: a juvenile **Eurasian Griffon Vulture** *Gyps fulvus*, two juvenile **Cinereous Vultures** *Aegypius monachus* (a rare passage migrant and winter visitor), a **Short-toed Snake Eagle** *Circaetus gallicus* (late date), a **Long-legged Buzzard** *Buteo rufinus*, a first-year **Eastern Imperial Eagle** *Aquila heliaca* and an adult **Bonelli's Eagle** *Hieraaetus fasciatus*.

Two **White-tailed Lapwings** *Vanellus leucurus* were at Fares, on a marsh next to the Nile, on 24 December. A **Little Swift** *Apus affinis* was seen at Sharm el Sheikh on 22 November; this is an unusual date for this mainly spring passage migrant. A **Red-breasted Flycatcher** *Ficedula parva* was at Lahami Bay Hotel, near Hamata, on the Red Sea coast, from 30 October to at least 4 November. A **Palestine Sunbird** *Nectarinia osea* was observed at St Katherine's monastery on 26 November, whilst a flock of 15 **Indian Silverbills** *Lonchura malabarica* was at Sharm el Sheikh on 21 November (per *Sandgrouse* 31: 92–93).

In February–May 2009 the following were reported. On the Red Sea coast, a **Striped Heron** *Butorides striata* was seen 30 km south of Damietta on 13 March and two **Goliath Herons** *Ardea goliath* were at Wadi Lahami on 1 March, with one there on 1 May. Two **Lappet-faced Vultures** *Torgos tracheliotus* were 5 km north of Berendice on 28 February, and at least eight were seen at Shalatein, with at least nine there on 1 May.

About 50 **Kittlitz's Plovers** *Charadrius pecuarius* were counted at Wadi el Natrun on 23 May. Two **Three-banded Plovers** *C. tricolor* were still present on 30 April

at Tut Amon village, Aswan, where two were first seen a few years ago; two juveniles were also claimed on that date. A **Lesser Sand Plover** *C. mongolus* was found at Wadi Lahami on 1 May and a **Sociable Lapwing** *Vanellus gregarius* at Abbasa, Sharqia, on 24 April. Seven **White-tailed Lapwings** in Dakhla oasis on 2 March, with five there on 3 March, probably from the same group, were the first for the Western Desert; this species is a scarce but regular passage migrant and winter visitor in Egypt, mainly recorded in the Nile Valley but also on the Red Sea coast.

At least four **African Collared Doves** *Streptopelia roseogrisea* and a **Namaqua Dove** *Oena capensis* were observed at Shams Alam, Red Sea, on 1 May. A **Grey Hypocolius** *Hypocolius ampelinus* was claimed from Wadi Gimel, Red Sea, on 2 March. A male **Red-tailed Wheatear** *Oenanthe xanthopygia* stayed at El Gouna farm, 20 km north of Hurghada, on 23–26 February at least. On 2 March, a **Moustached Warbler** *Acrocephalus melanopogon* was found at Dakhla oasis; this might be the first for the Western Desert. An **Isabelline Shrike** *Lanius isabellinus* was at Shams Alam on 1 May. A **House Crow** *Corvus splendens* was seen near Aswan on 25 March; this is remarkable, as the sedentary populations occur chiefly around Suez (per *Dutch Birding* 31: 125–131, 192–198; *Birding World* 22: 106, 199).

### Ethiopia

The paper on the occurrence of **White-tailed Swallow** *Hirundo megaensis* near Negele (*Bull. ABC* 16: 83–86) prompted the following report. A group of five **White-tailed Swallows**, comprising four adults and one brownish immature, was observed on the Liben Plains at c.1,500 m, along the Bongol Manyo-Negele road, 27 km from the Green Hotel, Negele, on 9 March 2006. The swallows frequented a small area of relatively long grass and substantial scrub and tree cover; no cattle herds were in the vicinity.

Another belated sighting concerns that of a group of six possible **cliff swallows** *Petrochelidon* sp., observed

on Fantalle Volcano, near Awash, at c.1,200 m on 21 November 2002; the birds had dark blue upperparts, a rufous rump, an incomplete dark smudgy collar, a pale throat, whitish underparts becoming very dingy on the undertail-coverts, with dingy white underwing-coverts and body-sides, and a short, slightly forked tail. They did not associate with other hirundines (*TJ*).

### The Gambia

In December 2008–May 2009 the following were reported. Up to three **Black Storks** *Ciconia nigra* were at Baboon Island, Central River Division, in mid March. An **Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus* observed at Tanji Bird Reserve, Western Division, on 19 December had been ringed as a nestling at Potsdam-Mittelmark, Brandenburg, Germany, on 9 July 2007. Two **Peregrine Falcons** *Falco peregrinus* flew over Brusubi, WD, on 18 February; two together is a rare sight in The Gambia (CBa). A **Baillon's Crake** *Porzana pusilla* with chicks was reported from Central River Division on 9 February (LS). A first-winter **Ring-billed Gull** *Larus delawarensis* was at Tanji Bird Reserve, WD, on 3 December. A corpse found at Kartong, WD, on 13 May was probably a **European Scops Owl** *Otus scops* (CBa).

### Ghana

Work on the Atlas progressed as planned, with nearly two months spent in the forest zone from late November 2008 to mid-January 2009, and also two months (March–April 2009) in the transition zone of the central east (from Digya National Park to the Togo border) and the savanna habitats of the north-east (from Salaga, Tamale and Walewale to the Togo border). By now 66 squares of the country's total of 94 have been visited. Highlights include two species new for Ghana: **Crested Lark** *Galerida cristata* (watched at close range in sandy farmland near the Togo border, near Wenchiiki, 10°15'N) and **Quailfinch Indigobird** *Vidua nigrinae* (birds singing in non-breeding dress in April, with clear imitations of African

Quailfinch *Ortygospiza atricollis*) at two localities (Sung at 09°58'N, and Yombabvau River at 09°40'N near the Togo border). As Quailfinches are widespread in the north, the indigobird is also likely to be one of the commonest in Ghana; other species of floodplains which can be numerous locally include **Black-backed Cisticola** *Cisticola eximius*.

A pair of **Black-headed Bee-eaters** *Merops breweri* feeding nestlings in riparian forest on the Sumi River in Digya National Park on 16 March constitutes an outstanding breeding record; the range of this rare bee-eater is thus extended eastwards in the Afram plains (*cf.* *Bull. ABC* 15: 268), all of which is protected within Digya National Park. A pair of **Emin's Shrikes**

*Lanius gubernator* feeding nestlings in a small *Terminalia* tree in woodland at the same locality and on the same date, is another noteworthy record. Also of interest are two **Gambaga Flycatchers** *Muscicapa gambagae* seen at close range in low-stature, rocky woodland near Gushiegu. Many species previously considered rather local were found throughout the north-east, e.g. **Dorst's Cisticola** *Cisticola guineae* and **Rufous Cisticola** *C. rufus*, the former being one of the first colonisers of coppice woodland following cultivation. Notable southward range extensions of savanna birds include **Yellow Penduline Tit** *Anthoscopus parvulus* found nesting near Donkorkrom (06°50'N) and **Swamp Flycatcher** *Muscicapa aquatica* reaching the Obosum River in Digya (07°12'N).

In the forest region of the southwest, many species considered as rare or local by previous publications appeared widespread, being found in virtually every square, e.g. **Congo Serpent Eagle** *Dryotriorchis spectabilis*, **Fraser's Eagle Owl** *Bubo poensis*, **Akun Eagle Owl** *B. leucostictus*, **Brown Nightjar** *Veles binotatus*, **Bates's Swift** *Apus batesi*, **Olivaceous Flycatcher** *Muscicapa olivascens*, **Grey-throated Flycatcher** *Myioparus griseigularis*, **Tit-hylia** *Pholidornis rushiae*, **Little Green Sunbird** *Anthreptes seimundi*, **Tiny Sunbird** *Cinnyris minutus*,

**Johanna's Sunbird** *C. johannae* and **White-breasted Negrofinch** *Nigrita fusconotus*. Of more localised species, **Black-collared Lovebird** *Agapornis swindernianus* was discovered in Subri River FR (=Forest Reserve), Takoradi District, and in Fure Headwaters FR, Asankrangwa District, **Yellow-throated Cuckoo** *Chrysococcyx flavigularis* was found to be locally common from Dadieso and the Boin River near Côte d'Ivoire to Bobiri FR near Kumasi, especially in logged forest, **Yellow-footed Honeyguide** *Melignomon zenkeri* was located by its afternoon song in three new squares (Opon Mansi FR in Dunkwa District, Boin River FR in Enchi District, and Sui River FR in Sefwi Wiawso District), **African Piculet** *Sasia africana* was added to two squares (Opon Mansi FR and Sui River FR) at forest edges or in overgrown cassava, whilst **Tessmann's Flycatcher** *Muscicapa tessmanni* was found to be locally common in open-canopy forest, from the Boin River and Opon Mansi to Tano Ofin and Bobiri FRs. In the south-west **Pale-fronted Negrofinch** *Nigrita luteifrons* was located only at Sui River FR (feeding on seeds of *Sterculia*), whereas it is more characteristic of the transition zone in eastern Ghana. Although **White-breasted Guineafowl** *Agelastes meleagrides* has been reported by hunters from three new localities (Subri River FR, Sui River FR and Tano Ofin FR), its status is extremely precarious, as is also that of the two *Ceratogymna* hornbills, on the verge of extinction through hunting.

Tano Ofin, west of Kumasi, one of only two highland forests in Ghana (the other being Atewa Range), is seriously degraded by illegal logging (up to 500 m altitude), but produced many 'new' records on 5–8 January, especially on the plateau at 700 m, among them: **Blue-headed Bee-eater** *Merops muelleri*, **Brown-cheeked Hornbill** *Bycanistes cylindricus*, **Yellow-spotted Barbet** *Buccanodon duchaillui* and **Ansorge's Greenbul** *Andropadus ansorgei* at their northern limit of range, **Brown-chested Alethe** *Alethe poliocephala*, **Forest Scrub Robin** *Erythropygia leu-*

*costicta*, **Black-capped Apalis** *Apalis nigriceps*, **Pale-breasted Illadopsis** *Illadopsis rufipennis*, **Rufous-winged Illadopsis** *I. rufescens*, **Dusky Tit** *Parus funereus* and **Copper-tailed Glossy Starling** *Lamproornis cupreocauda*, whilst **Preuss's Weaver** *Ploceus preussi* was found feeding juveniles in a nest at a height of 45 m in a *Ceiba* tree. Of the forest reserves listed above, Tano Ofin was the only site where **Dusky Long-tailed Cuckoo** *Cercococcyx mechowi* was heard.

A first complete exploration of the drier forests of the transition zone, between Ho and Kyabobo near the Togo border, produced consistent lists which include the following characteristic species, all common: **Cassin's Hawk Eagle** *Hieraetus africanus* (more common here than in the south-west), **Barred Owlet** *Glaucidium capense*, **Purple-throated Cuckooshrike** *Campephaga quiscalina*, **Leaflove** *Pyrrhurus scandens*, **Baumann's Greenbul** *Phyllastrephus baumannii*, **Blue-shouldered Robin Chat** *Cossypha cyanocampter*, **Red-cheeked Wattle-eye** *Dyaphorophyia blissetti*, **Shrike-Flycatcher** *Megabyas flavammulatus*, **Brown Illadopsis** *Illadopsis fulvescens*, **Puvet's Illadopsis** *I. puveli*, **Black-winged Oriole** *Oriolus nigripennis* and **Square-tailed Drongo** *Dicrurus ludwigii*. **Grey-headed Bristlebill** *Bleda canicapilla* was the only bristlebill found. **Western Bearded Greenbul** *Criniger barbatus* and **Finsch's Flycatcher Thrush** *Stizorhina finschi* are some of several species confined to sheltered, riverine conditions. The only **Sooty Boubous** *Laniarius leucorhynchus* of the trip were found in Kabo River FR, near Kadjebi. **Fiery-breasted Bushshrike** *Malacoptonus cruentus* apparently occurred in every square, but most of the birds seen were yellow, posing the problem of separation between this species and Lagden's Bushshrike *M. lagdeni*. **Black-shouldered Nightjar** *Caprimulgus nigriscapularis* is the most common nightjar of the transition zone. A **Buff-spotted Flufftail** *Sarothrura elegans* was singing in the rain on 29 March in Apepesu FR, near the Togo border, and another

was heard in Fure Headwaters FR in the south-west on 16 December (end of the rains); these are only the second and third records of a species discovered in Ghana as recently as 1995 (*cf. Bull. ABC* 15: 192).

Many Palearctic passerines crossed the country on a broad front, in two waves. The first came to an end just after the first week of April and probably included locally wintering birds, the second appeared after mid April and petered out by the end of the month. Species included **Whinchat** *Saxicola rubetra*, **Melodious Warbler** *Hippolais polyglotta*, **Willow Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochilus*, **Wood Warbler** *P. sibilatrix* and **Pied Flycatcher** *Ficedula hypoleuca*. Some species appear to leave the country early, by mid March, e.g. **Common Nightingale** *Luscinia megarhynchos* (last record on 10 March, near Mpraeiso) and **Garden Warbler** *Sylvia borin* (last record on 14 March, at Digya). Last dates for **Tree Pipit** *Anthus trivialis* (28 April) and **Willow Warbler** (24 April) are much later than previously recorded. There was sustained passage of Palearctic **Red-rumped Swallows** *Hirundo daurica* in small numbers in the second half of April throughout the north-east (FD-L & RJD).

## Guinea

An African Pitta *Pitta angolensis* was photographed by a camera trap in forest at Pic de Fon, in the extreme south-east of the country, on 2 April 2009 (TW); this is yet another addition to the birdlist of this important site, where 353 species have been recorded to date.

## Kenya

The following reports are from January–June 2009. Two **Masked Boobies** *Sula dactylatra* were seen 20 km off Watamu on 26 February, whilst an immature **Greater Frigatebird** *Fregata minor* was at Watamu beach on 18 May. Two **Dwarf Bitterns** *Ixobrychus sturmii* were at Nairobi National Park (=NP) on 6 May, whilst a dark **Dimorphic Egret** *Egretta dimorpha* was with Little Egrets *E. garzetta* at Magadi on 1 June. Three **Abdim's Storks**

*Ciconia abdimii* near Ramisi, south of Mombasa, on 15 January is an unusual record for the coast. A count of 2,200 **Glossy Ibises** *Plegadis falcinellus* going to roost in the Tana River Delta on 30 March led to an estimate of c.10,000 birds roosting at the site, illustrating once again the importance of this threatened wetland. A male **Common Teal** *Anas crecca* in breeding plumage was at Hippo Camp, Naivasha, on 15 January.

An immature **African Cuckoo Hawk** *Aviceda cuculoides* was observed in Nairobi NP on 8 June. **Bat Hawks** *Macheiramphus alcinus* were seen around Nairobi on 15 January and 5 February; this species is not frequently seen here. An immature **Egyptian Vulture** *Neophron percnopterus* was in Nairobi NP on 23 February; the species has become increasingly rare and this is probably one of the first records for the park in several years. A probable **Eurasian Griffon Vulture** *Gyps fulvus* was observed in Nairobi NP on 18 January and another on 29th; records of this species are still being examined by the East African Rarities Committee. An **African Marsh Harrier** *Circus ranivorus* was noted at Mwea ricefields on 17 January; the species has become significantly rarer over the past few decades in Kenya. A **Long-legged Buzzard** *Buteo rufinus* flying over Westlands, Nairobi, on 20 February is an unusual record. A **Secretary Bird** *Sagittarius serpentarius* on Mt Kenya at 3,300 m, in March, seems a very high-altitude record. An adult male **Red-footed Falcon** *Falco vespertinus* was observed in Nairobi NP on 9 May; there are fewer than ten records of this species in Kenya.

**African Hobbies** *F. cuvierii*, uncommon in the central highlands, were noted in Nairobi NP on 6 May and at Blue Posts Inn, Thika, on 13 February; one was also on the coast, at Kilifi, where it is very rare, on 11 April.

A **Corncrake** *Crex crex* on Mbagathi Ridge, Karen, on 12 April, is an unusual record for Nairobi. A **Little Ringed Plover** *Charadrius dubius* was in Nairobi NP on 5 February and a **Lesser**

**Sand Plover** *C. mongolus* on Lake Oloidien, Naivasha, on 15 January. **Temminck's Stints** *Calidris temminckii* were seen in Nairobi NP on 1 January (one) and at Dandora Sewage Works on 14 January (two)—this is never a common species, especially away from the Rift Valley; seven together at Hippo Camp, Naivasha, on 15 January is an unusually high number; two more were at Mwea rice fields on 17 January. Two **Slender-billed Gulls** *Larus genei* were at Sabaki River mouth on 1 June; this species is only reported from Kenya every few years.

A pair of **Meyer's Parrots** *Poicephalus meyeri* was investigating a possible nest hole in Nairobi NP on 20 June. A **Ross's Turaco** *Musophaga rossae* at Loldia Farm, Naivasha, on 8 April and possibly the same bird at Elsamere on 22 April had probably come down from the now heavily disturbed Mau forest. One of the easternmost records in Kenya for **Bare-faced Go-away Bird** *Corythaixoides personatus* was made on 24 January at Sampu Camp, Nguruman Mts. Rare records for Nairobi NP involved a **Black Cuckoo** *Cuculus clamosus* on 8 June and a **Verreaux's Eagle Owl** *Bubo lacteus* on 1 January. A **Pel's Fishing Owl** *Scotopelia peli* was photographed in the Tana River Delta on 1 April; this species is rarely reported in Kenya. An **African Pygmy Kingfisher** *Ceyx pictus* ringed at Watamu in July 2007, was retrapped on 31 March—an early date.

A **Friedmann's Lark** *Mirafra pulpa* was heard at Maktao Gate, Tsavo West NP, on 6 April. The same species was also found in Shaba National Park on 17 May 2009 (Fig. 2), on which date the endemic **Williams's Lark** *M. williamsi* (Fig. 3) was also present at the same site (AR). **Collared Lark** *M. collaris* was photographed and sound-recorded near Haberswein, near the Somali border, on 28 May; this appears to be the first record in Kenya since 1967. A male **Chestnut-backed Sparrow Lark** *Eremopterix leucotis* was found near Mwea ricefields on 17 January—an odd place for this arid-country species. Two **White**

**Wagtails** *Motacilla alba* were at Dandora Sewage Works on 14 January. Four pairs of **Bush Pipits** *Anthus caffer* were encountered in the Ulu Hills on 7 February; a high density for this scarce species. A **Golden Pipit** *Tmetothylacus tenellus* at Laikipia in January–February is unusual for this area. A male **Iranian Warbler** *Irania gutturalis* in Nairobi NP on 11 January was joined by three more on 18 January and stayed until 2 March—this is a rare species around Nairobi. **Common Rock Thrush** *Monticola saxatilis* was seen at Watamu on 30 March and 2 April; this species was formerly common along the north coast, but has become scarce in the past ten years.

A **Great Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* in Nairobi NP on 9 February is a rather unusual date. A **Basra Reed Warbler** *A. griseldis* was at Kilifi on 10 April; whilst it must be present along the coast this species is rarely reported from there. Two **Olive-tree Warblers** *Hippolais olivetorum* were found in Nairobi NP on 2 March; an unusual species around Nairobi, especially so early in the spring. An **Icterine Warbler** *H. icterina* was seen at Nairobi Golf Course on 14 March; this is a rare species anywhere in Kenya and possibly only the second in Nairobi for c.15 years. In Nairobi NP, an adult **Barred Warbler** *Sylvia nisoria* was recorded on 4 January—there has been only one other record since the 1970s around Nairobi; on 24 March, two were ringed at Watamu, the first there since 1999. Considered extirpated in Kenya only a few years ago, **Black-backed Cisticola** *Cisticola eximius* seems to have made a comeback in Masai Mara, where it was again observed on 4 January. Three **Pale Flycatchers** *Bradornis pallidus* of the race *bafirawari* (sometimes named Wahjier Grey Flycatcher) were photographed near the Somali border on 28 May; this taxon had not been recorded for over 80 years.

A flock of **Brown Babblers** *Turdoides plebejus* at the Ewaso Nyira River, just south of Sabuk Lodge, on 29 January, was unusually far east. A flock of six **Hinde's Babblers** *T.*

*hindei* was observed in Ol Donyo Sabuk NP on 1 May. A male **Beautiful Sunbird** *Cinnyris pulchellus* in full breeding plumage was seen in Nairobi NP on 2 March, whilst two were at Gigiri on 11 March; this dry-country species is only occasionally reported from Nairobi. Four **Cardinal Queleas** *Quelea cardinalis* in Nairobi NP on 8 June is another unusual species around Nairobi. **Black Bishops** *Euplectes gierowii* were seen at Shompole Lodge, Nguruman Mts, on 25 January (one) and 1 June (two); this southern population is not reported annually. Also at Shompole Lodge, a **Fire-fronted Bishop** *E. diaadematus* was seen on 1 June. In Nairobi NP, up to 23 **African Silverbills** *Lonchura cantans* were seen on 4 January, with more there in February; there is just one previous record of this species for the area. **Somali Golden-breasted Bunting** *Emberiza poliopleura* was recorded at Langata in early January and in Nairobi NP on 9 February; this is a new species for Nairobi (CJ).

### Libya

On 28 March 2009, a **Eurasian Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter nisus*, probably a male, flew over Wadi Ash Shati, Fezzan, and on 30 March an immature female was observed there; these are apparently the first records of this species for this region (JH, SB & EF).

### Madeira

Records from January–May 2009 include the following. A **Great Northern Diver** *Gavia immer* was observed in the Funchal area from 29 January until 21 February and on 13 March. A **Squacco Heron** *Ardeola ralloides* was at Lugar de Baixo on 26 May, whilst four **Cattle Egrets** *Bubulcus ibis*, reportedly present since September 2008, were still at Santana on 24 February. The long-staying first **Green-winged Teal** *Anas crecca carolinensis* for the island was still at Ribeira da Janela in late March (the bird has now been at this site for two years), and the second at Lugar de Baixo was still there in May. A **Black Kite** *Milvus migrans* flew over Caniçal on 9 March and a **Spotted**

**Crake** *Porzana porzana* was on the Machico River on 14 February. A pair of **Eurasian Coots** *Fulica atra* with four chicks at Lugar de Baixo in late May is the first breeding record of the species for Madeira.

A **Bar-tailed Godwit** *Limosa lapponica* was at Calheta power station reservoir on 17 May, with a **Wilson's Phalarope** *Phalaropus tricolor* also there on 15 May. A **Spotted Sandpiper** *Actitis macularius* was seen on the island on 11 February. Noteworthy gull records include a **Laughing Gull** *Larus atricilla* at Funchal from 31 January through March, with up to seven **Iceland Gulls** *L. glaucopterus* also there, a **Ring-billed Gull** *L. delawarensis* at Caniçal on 19 February and a record flock of 15 **Black-legged Kittiwakes** *Rissa tridactyla* there on 14–19 February. A **Sooty Tern** *Sterna fuscata* and four **Roseate Terns** *S. dougallii* were noted at Selvagem Pequena, Selvagens, on 11 April.

Two **Woodlarks** *Lullula arborea* at Ponta São Lourenço on 14 February may represent the first record of this species for Madeira. **Calandra Larks** *Melanocorypha calandra* were reported on 14 February (one) and at Caniçal on 20 March (two). Also on 20 March, c.20 **Red-rumped Swallows** *Cecropis daurica* were seen at Machico (per Dutch Birding 31: 127–129; Birding World 22: 56, 106, 146, 199).

### Mali

A **Sardinian Warbler** *Sylvia melanocephala* was observed near Bougini, east of Tombouctou ( $16^{\circ}49'10''N$   $02^{\circ}02'52''W$ ), on 1 February 2009 (EW & LZ). Detailed field notes made in May 1999 and June 2008 by two observers suggest that **Splendid Sunbird** *Cinnyris coccinigaster* is present in Bamako (per MC).

### Morocco

Records from February–May 2009 (with one from November 2008) include the following. A **Great Northern Diver** *Gavia immer* was at Khnifiss, Tarfaya, on 8 March. A flock of 42 **Great Cormorants** *Phalacrocorax carbo sinensis* flew north over the desert east of Boumalne



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**Figure 1.** Lesser Yellowlegs / Petit Chevalier *Tringa flavipes*, Moremi Game Reserve, Botswana, 12 April 2009 (Gert Huijzers)

**Figure 2.** Friedmann's Lark / Alouette de Friedmann *Mirafra pulpa*, Shaba National Park, Kenya, 17 May 2009 (Adam Riley / Rockjumper Birding Tours)

**Figure 3.** Williams's Lark / Alouette de Williams *Mirafra williamsi*, Shaba National Park, Kenya, 17 May 2009 (Adam Riley / Rockjumper Birding Tours)

**Figure 4.** Glossy Ibis / Ibis falcinelle *Plegadis falcinellus* Seychelles Golf Club, Mahé, Seychelles, 13 December 2008 (Adrian Skerrett)

**Figure 5.** King Penguin / Manchot royal *Aptenodytes patagonicus* in rehabilitation, St Francis Bay, Eastern Cape, South Africa, 17 February 2009 (Gregg Darling)

**Figure 6.** Macaroni Penguin / Gorfou doré *Eudyptes chrysophrys*, Brandfontein, Cape Agulhas, South Africa, 28 February 2009 (Trevor Hardaker)



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**Figure 7.** Male Striped Crake / Marouette rayée *Aenigmatolimnas marginalis*, Sabi Sands Game Reserve, Mpumalanga, South Africa, 21 March 2009 (Paddy Hagelthorn)

**Figure 8.** Female Striped Crake / Marouette rayée *Aenigmatolimnas marginalis*, Sabi Sands Game Reserve, Mpumalanga, South Africa, 28 March 2009 (Neil Whyte)

**Figure 9.** Citrine Wagtail / Bergeronnette citrine *Motacilla citreola*, Kleinmond Sewage Works, Western Cape, South Africa, 11 April 2009 (John Graham)

**Figure 10.** Spike-heeled Lark *Chersomanes albofasciata* of the isolated race *beesleyi* ('Beesley's Lark'), Angyata Osugat, north of Arusha, Tanzania, 30 January 2009 (Martin Goodey)

*Alouette éperonnée* *Chersomanes albofasciata* de la sous-espèce isolée *beesleyi* ('Alouette de Beesley'), Angyata Osugat, au nord d'Arusha, Tanzanie, 30 janvier 2009 (Martin Goodey)

**Figure 11.** Bearded Vulture / Gypaète barbu *Gypaetus barbatus*, Mt Meru, Tanzania, 30 January 2009 (Martin Goodey)

Dadès on 29 March. A **Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea* of the pale Mauritanian race *monicae* was photographed at Hoja Llameria, Dhakla Bay, on 22 April and another at Khnifiss lagoon, Tarfaya, on 23 April; these are the first for Morocco. In April–May, up to two adult **Bearded Vultures** *Gypaetus barbatus* were frequently observed at Oukaimeden, High Atlas, where the species is considered close to extinction. A second-year **Spanish Imperial Eagle** *Aquila adalberti* stayed at the Tagdilt track, near Boumalne Dadès, in late March. A juvenile **Allen's Gallinule** *Porphyrrio allenii* was captured and taken into care at Melilla, the Spanish enclave in northern Morocco, on 21 November 2008; it died six days later. Between 30 March and 10 April, two male **Houbara Bustards** *Chlamydotis undulata* were seen south of Erfoud; this Vulnerable species has been reported slightly more frequently in recent years.

In the south-west, at least ten adult **Kelp Gulls** *Larus dominicanus* stayed at Khnifiss lagoon from at least early March until early May. On 10 April, one was exchanging positions on a nest with a Yellow-legged Gull *L. cachinnans michahellis*, and a pair was seen distantly on a nest. In West Saharan Morocco, a few **Great Black-backed Gulls** *Larus marinus* were recorded, e.g. at Dakhla on 20 April (per *Dutch Birding* 31: 122–129, 188–198). A **Black-legged Kittiwake** *Rissa tridactyla* was reported from the desert at Agdz, Dadès-Draa, on 17 February (per *Birding World* 22: 56). At least 1,000 **Gull-billed Terns** *Sterna nilotica* were roosting at Oued Souss on 14 April; this is an exceptionally large number (per *Birding World* 22: 146–147). In early April, **Tawny Owls** *Strix aluco* were found nesting in the town centres of Marrakech and Taroudannt.

Probably hundreds of **Dunn's Larks** *Eremalauda dunnii* and even larger numbers of **Black-crowned Sparrow Larks** *Eremopterix nigriceps* were present along the Dakhla–Aousserd road, in West Saharan Morocco, in late April–early May. An **Isabelline Wheatear**

*Oenanthe isabellina* was observed at Tafraoute, Western Anti-Atlas, on 15 or 16 February. Since spring 2006, **Eastern Olivaceous Warblers** *Hippolais pallida* of the pale, North African race *reiseri* have been found frequently in the south-east; until recently, its occurrence in Morocco was poorly documented and required confirmation. In March–April, the taxon was found again at various places in Morocco, with birds singing at Aoufous (two), Merzouga, Ouarzazate (two) and Touroug (four); it has presumably been overlooked in the past. In West Saharan Morocco, four **Cricket Warblers** *Spiloptila clamans* were seen along the Dakhla–Aousserd road on 22 March and in late April; on 8 May, up to nine were found. Also there, two male and five female **Sudan Golden Sparrows** *Passer luteus* were observed (and photographed) on 21 April, along with several tens of **Desert Sparrows** *P. simplex*. The latter species has become rare in the south-east in recent years, being replaced by House Sparrows *P. domesticus* at former strongholds like Café Yasmina near Merzouga; on 30 March three fledglings were being fed by a male while the female was sitting on the only nest known in this area this spring (per *Dutch Birding* 31: 122–129, 188–198).

#### Mozambique

Records in December 2008–May 2009 include the following. In May, two **Great Crested Grebes** *Podiceps cristatus* were found on a large pan c.10 km south-east of Inhambane; this is a very rare vagrant in Mozambique. A dark-morph **Red-footed Booby** *Sula sula* was reported close inshore at Ponta da Barra, near Inhambane, on 1 March. **Greater Frigatebirds** *Fregata minor* were seen at Tofo on 30 December (two), off Linga Linga on 2 January (one), at Ponta Malangane on 26–27 March (one) and c.15 km offshore of Ponta da Barra on 26 May (one). A **Lesser Frigatebird** *F. ariel* was at Morrengulu on 5 January. A flock of at least 138 **Crab Plovers** *Dromas ardeola* was at Ponta da Barra on

24–25 January, with at least 178 still present on 26 March (per *TH*).

A **Spur-winged Lapwing** *Vanellus spinosus* was photographed along the Chicombane–Zongoene road ( $24^{\circ}04'02.03''$   $33^{\circ}29'02.08''E$ ) on 31 December 2008 (per *NS*). An immature **Brown Noddy** *Anous stolidus* was seen at close range at Bilene lagoon, Gaza Province, along the coast north of Maputo, on 15 March, apparently heading for the ocean (*BP*); although small numbers of this species occur in the Mozambique Channel in the austral summer, it is a vagrant ashore.

On 18 May, a male **Northern Wheatear** *Oenanthe oenanthe* in full breeding plumage was discovered on the Sunguti River floodplain near Chibuto; this species is a rare vagrant to southern Africa, with only some 20 previous records. Also in May, a **Variable Sunbird** *Cinnyris venustus* was observed c.20 km west of Inharrime; this is much further south than the known range of the species (per *TH*).

#### Namibia

Records from January–June 2009 include the following. A very weak juvenile **Tristan Albatross** *Diomedea exulans* *dabbenena* was found at Cape Cross on 23 January; it died shortly after having been taken into care. Also on 23rd, a freshly dead **Light-mantled Albatross** *Phoebetria palpebrata* was found south of Walvis Bay; this is the first record for Namibia. A **Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus* was at the mouth of the Swakop River on 24–25 January. On 15 January, a **Western Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus* was observed at Shamvura. A **European Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ostralegus* was in the Walvis Bay area on 24–25 January, an **American Golden Plover** *Pluvialis dominica* at the Swakop River mouth in January–early February and a **Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa* at Walvis Bay on 15 January. As usual, Mile 4 Salt Works at Swakopmund held up to two long-staying **Common Redshanks** *Tringa totanus* from January to at least 31 May. At least three **Red-necked Phalaropes**

*Phalaropus lobatus* were in the Walvis Bay area on 24 January; by early February there were at least six, and on 12 June one of a group of at least six was in full breeding plumage. Also there were at least eight **Red Phalaropes** *P. fulicarius* on 21 February and a **Common Black-headed Gull** *Larus ridibundus* in full breeding plumage from 24 January to at least early February. A **Franklin's Gull** *L. pipixcan* was seen at Okerfontein waterhole, c.25 km west of Namutoni, Etosha National Park, on 3 April; although this Nearctic species is an almost annual vagrant to southern Africa's coast, it is very rare inland.

A remarkable record is that of four **Bohm's Spinetails** *Neafrapus boehmi* with a group of Little Swifts *Apus affinis* in the vicinity of Windhoek International Airport on 22 March; in Namibia, the species is known only from the Caprivi Strip. Two **Angola Swallows** *Hirundo angolensis* were seen flying over the Chobe River at King's Den Rest Camp (on the Namibian side opposite Sududu Island) amongst many other hirundines, on 12 June. In Mudumu National Park, a **Shelley's Sunbird** *Cinnyris shelleyi* was photographed on 10 May (per TH).

## Rwanda

A **Grey Wagtail** *Motacilla cinerea*, a generally scarce Palearctic winter visitor, was observed at Bugarama, near the Rubyiro River, in December 2008 (CN).

## Senegal

A **Stone-curlew** *Burhinus oedicnemus* was observed in the company of nine **Senegal Thick-knees** *B. senegalensis* at Dakar on 4 February 2009 (VS & PB); there are few records so far south.

## Seychelles

Reports received by Seychelles Bird Records Committee (SBRC) from mid-December 2008 to mid-June 2009 include a **Plain Martin** *Riparia paludicola* at Anse Etoile, Mahé, on 9 December 2008, which has been accepted as the first record for Seychelles (for details, see pp.

213–215 of this issue). Other accepted records include an adult **Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus* at Seychelles Golf Club, Mahé, on 13 December (fourth record; Fig. 4), two female **Northern Pintails** *Anas acuta* at Roche Caiman, Mahé, on 20 December (tenth record), an adult male **Ferruginous Duck** *Aythya nyroca* on Denis Island on 17 November (fourth record), an adult nominate race **Black Kite** *Milvus migrans* on Alphonse on 24 December and presumably the same individual on 7 January (third record), an adult and an immature **Collared Pratincole** *Glareola pratincola* at Amitié, Praslin, on 28 November (ninth record), a **Little Ringed Plover** *Charadrius dubius* on Alphonse on 21 November (tenth record), a **Grey-tailed Tattler** *Heteroscelus brevipes* at St François Atoll on 17 November (fourth record), an adult **Jacobin Cuckoo** *Oxylophorus jacobinus* on Cousine Island from 30 November to 4 December (tenth record), a **European Nightjar** *Caprimulgus europaeus* on Aride Island on 20 November (fifth record), and a female or first-winter **Common Redstart** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* on Alphonse on 18–22 November (tenth record).

Other reports accepted by SBRC during the period include two **Little Egrets** *Egretta garzetta* on Praslin on 31 December and one at Providence, Mahé, on 25 January (24–25th records), an adult **Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea* at Roche Caiman, Mahé, on 14–20 December at least (36th record), an immature **Eleonora's Falcon** *Falco eleonorae* on Aride Island on 19 November (28th record), up to three **Eurasian Hobbies** *Falco subbuteo* on Denis on 24–27 November and a first-winter on Cousine Island on 24 December–11 January (20th and 21st records), a **Common Snipe** *Gallinago gallinago* on Alphonse on 16–22 November and one at Roche Caiman, Mahé, on 20 December (13–14th records), a first-winter **Common Black-headed Gull** *Larus ridibundus* on Alphonse on 13–15 December (16th record), a **Lesser Cuckoo** *Cuculus poliocephalus*

found dead on North Island on 20 December (13th record), an immature **Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava* on Aride on 19 November (30th record), a **Common Sand Martin** *Riparia riparia* on Alphonse on 23–26 December (18th record), and a first-winter male **Northern Wheatear** *Oenanthe oenanthe* (45th record).

Still under review by SBRC are the first report for Seychelles of a **Bulwer's Petrel** *Bulweria bulwerii* at sea near Cosmoledo on 17 March, a **Madagascar Pond Heron** *Ardeola idae* at Poivre on 19 March (the fourth report east of Aldabra, where it breeds), together with the fifth **Red-footed Falcon** *Falco vespertinus* on Aride on 5 December, a **Lesser Kestrel** *Falco naumanni* on Alphonse on 27 February–3 April, a **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** *Calidris acuminata* on Alphonse on 8–16 May and a **Little Swift** *Apus affinis* on North Island on 24 January.

Also of interest and under review are reports of a **Jouanin's Petrel** *Bulweria fallax* at sea between Cosmoledo and Poivre on 18 March (11 previous records), a **Great Egret** *Egretta alba* at St Joseph Atoll on 26 April (12 previous records), an adult **Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea* on Desroches on 23 April (36 previous records), four **Black-winged Pratincoles** *Glareola nordmanni* on Alphonse on 4–16 May (seven previous records), and a **Pacific Swift** *Apus pacificus* on Alphonse on 19 March (ten previous records).

An exceptional invasion of **Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters** *Merops persicus* in November–December 2008, involving several hundred birds from Bird and Denis in the north to Alphonse in the south, was reported (see Bull. ABC 16: 108). By late December most had moved on, except on Denis, Bird, D'Arros, St Joseph and Alphonse. On Denis c.10 remained through January, increasing to c.20 in February and 30 in April, declining thereafter with most having departed by 6 June, but three remained to at least 15 June. On Bird four were present until at least 4 May. On D'Arros numbers declined steadily from c.10 in January to

three by 10 June. On St Joseph ten were present in January, with one remaining until at least 10 June. On Alphonse up to three were seen until 21 February. Elsewhere, 13 were reported at Cote d'Or, Praslin, on 19–28 April; on Aride, up to three on 25–31 December and one on 3–4 February; on Curieuse four on 6 January; on Silhouette, none from 27 December until three on 22 April; on Eden, two on 30 January and three on 10 February; on St François, three on 15 January; on Poivre, four on 12 March; and on Desroches, three on 27 February and 12–15 on 23 April (AS).

### Sierra Leone

A flock of 15–20 swifts, identified as **African Black Apus barbatus** and **Bates's Swifts A. batesi**, flew over the Kambui Hills, near Kenema, on 14 May 2009 (BdB).

### Socotra

In late October–early November 2008 the following were reported. Off the Ras Hebak coast a spectacular feeding frenzy of 800 **Audubon's Shearwaters Puffinus lherminieri persicus** ('Persian Shearwater') and 2,500 **Brown Noddies Anous stolidus** was observed on 2 November. The first **Little Bittern Ixobrychus minutus** for Socotra, a juvenile male, was seen on 25–27 October. A juvenile **Yellow Bittern I. sinensis** was at Wadi Hadibu on 29 October; this species has been found a few times since 1999, including both adults and juveniles, and might breed. Other herons included up to three **Indian Pond Herons Ardeola grayii**, an **Intermediate Egret Egretta intermedia**, the island's third, at Wadi Hadibu on 24 October, and single **Great Egrets E. alba** at two sites. A **Black Kite Milvus migrans** flew over Hadibu on 25–26 October. An impressive 341 **Egyptian Vultures Neophron percnopterus** departed their roosts on the cliffs and trees around the town at dawn; this is an extremely important number for this globally Endangered species. A juvenile **Spotted Crake Porzana porzana** was observed at Wadi Hadibu on 25–26 October and a juvenile **Little**

**Crake P. parva** at the Qalansiya estuary on 27 October; small crakes are very rare on the island. Two adult **White-eyed Gulls Larus leucocephalus** roosted at Wadi Hadibu on 29 October–5 November and four **Whiskered Terns Chlidonias hybrida** were at Sirhan lagoon. Socotra's first **Northern Wheatear Oenanthe oenanthe** was discovered on 27 October and the second **Eurasian Golden Oriole Oriolus oriolus** on 26th (per *Sandgrouse* 31: 103).

### South Africa

Records from late December 2008–June 2009 include the following. During pelagic trips south-west of Cape Point, a juvenile **Wandering Albatross Diomedea exulans** was noted on 30 December and singles of **Northern Royal Albatross D. (epomophora) sanfordi** on 8 February and 21 June; these are unusual dates for these species to occur here. An immature **Wandering Albatross** was seen during a seawatch from Cape Point on 27 June. An adult **Salvin's Albatross Thallasarche (cauta) salvini** was photographed in a feeding flock behind a trawler, c. 80 nautical miles south of Cape Point, on 28 May. Two **Light-mantled Albatrosses Phoebetria palpebrata** were found ashore in Western Cape, one near Mossel Bay on 7 January and another at Struisbaai on 22 January; both were taken into care but died shortly afterwards. A pelagic trip out of Simon's Town on 21 June recorded a **Southern Fulmar Fulmarus glacialis**. Also in June, a sick Southern Fulmar, found on Clovelly beach, Western Cape, died before it could be taken into care. A pelagic trip out of Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, on 13 June came across an unusually large group of 400–500 **Flesh-footed Shearwaters Puffinus carneipes** around a trawler. A seawatch from Cape Point on 17 May produced a **Little Shearwater P. assimilis**.

A heavily moulted, but apparently healthy **King Penguin Aptenodytes patagonicus** came ashore west of St Francis Bay, Eastern Cape, on 13 February; this appears to be the sixth record for southern Africa (Fig. 5). An adult **Northern Rockhopper**

**Penguin Eudyptes c. chrysocome** came ashore at Struisbaai, Western Cape, on 29 January; the bird was also in moult and apparently healthy. Two **Macaroni Penguins E. chrysolophus** were reported from Western Cape: the 13th for southern Africa was a healthy individual which stayed at Brandfontein, near Cape Agulhas, from 25 February to 5 March (Fig. 6), whilst the 14th, found at Betty's Bay on 16 March, was in poor health and was taken into care, where it made a dramatic recovery.

**Red-tailed Tropicbirds Phaethon rubricauda** were reported from Plettenberg Bay, Western Cape, on 16 April, and near Port St Johns, on the Wild Coast, Eastern Cape, on 30 April. An adult **White-tailed Tropicbird P. lepturus** flew over Somerset West, Western Cape, on 1 January. An **Australian Gannet Morus serrator** was on Malgas Island, Western Cape, on 13 February, whilst a **Red-footed Booby Sula sula** was found dead at Swartvlei Beach, on the Garden Route, Western Cape, on 16 December. **Greater Frigatebirds Fregata minor** were observed at St Francis Bay, Eastern Cape, on 12 March and along the beach near Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, on 24–25 May. In June, a ten-day trip aboard a tuna longliner between Durban and Richards Bay, ranging 20–70 nautical miles offshore, produced a male **Greater Frigatebird**, a **Red-footed Booby**, a **South Polar Skua Catharacta maccormicki** and up to 50 **Sooty Terns Sternula fuscata**.

The **Slaty Egret Egretta vinaceigula** located at Mkhombo Dam, Gauteng, at the end of November 2008, remained there until at least 17 January; another was still present at Marievale Bird Sanctuary on 23 March. Single **European Honey Buzzards Pernis apivorus** were reported throughout the country, from Western Cape (Ceres), Northern Cape (Kimberley, 10 January), KwaZulu-Natal (Mtubatuba, 28 December; Umhlatuze Valley Sugar Estate, near Richards Bay, 7 March; Port Edward Holiday Resort, 9 April), Limpopo (Modimolle, 25 December), North West Province (Kgomo-Kgomo, 10



12



13



14



15



16



17

**Figure 12.** Eastern Double-collared Sunbird *Cinnyris mediocris* of the isolated race *usambaricus*, Mazumbi, East Usambaras, Tanzania, 9 January 2009 (Martin Goodey)

Souimanga du Kilimandjaro *Cinnyris mediocris* de la sous-espèce isolée *usambaricus*, Mazumbi, East Usambaras, Tanzanie, 9 janvier 2009 (Martin Goodey)

**Figure 13.** Black Tern *Chlidonias niger* with Roseate Terns *S. dougallii* and Saunders's Terns *S.saundersi*, Mazine Island, Pangani, Tanzania, 21 March 2009 (Ole Krogh)

La première Guifette noire *Chlidonias niger* pour la Tanzanie, avec des Sternes de Dougall *S. dougalli* et des Sternes de Saunders *S.saundersi*, Île de Mazine, Pangani, Tanzanie, 21 mars 2009 (Ole Krogh)

**Figure 14.** Cattle Egret / Héron gardeboeufs *Bubulcus ibis*, Tristan da Cunha, 11 May 2009 (Brad Robson)

**Figure 15.** Immature Little Blue Heron / Aigrette bleue *Egretta caerulea*, Tristan da Cunha, 18 April 2009 (Brad Robson)

**Figure 16.** Little Egret / Aigrette garzette *Egretta garzetta*, Tristan da Cunha, 4 April 2009 (Brad Robson)

**Figure 17.** Purple Heron / Héron pourpré *Ardea purpurea*, off Gough, Tristan da Cunha group, South Atlantic, 8 April 2009 (Phil Palmer)

April), Gauteng (Northern Farms, 10 January; Bryanston area, 1 February; Schurweberg, 28 February; Roodeplaat Dam Nature Reserve and over a residential garden, 1 March) and Kruger National Park (Pafuri, 12 April). In Gauteng, a **Western Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus* was still at Marievale Bird Sanctuary on 23 March, with another in the Kgomo-Kgomo area, north of Pretoria, on 8 February; one was also at Loch Athlone near Bethlehem, Free State, on 28 December, and one at Darvill Bird Sanctuary, KwaZulu-Natal, on 1 March. **Striped Crakes** *Aenigmatolimnas marginalis* were reported from an ephemeral pool in Mapungubwe National Park, Limpopo, on 2 January (one), Kgomo-Kgomo floodplain, North West Province, on 29 March (one), and Sabi Sands Game Reserve, Mpumalanga, from 6 March to at least 29 March (two adults and three chicks) (Figs. 7–8).

A **Crab Plover** *Dromas ardeola* was observed at the Umgeni River mouth in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, on 21 December, with up to three at Richards Bay from 31 December until at least 10 January; at least two were still present on 20 March. Also in KwaZulu-Natal, a **European Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ostralegus* originally located in mid December in the St Lucia area was still present on 15 February; two were there with three **African Black Oystercatchers** *H. moquini* on 21–22 February. At least one European Oystercatcher was still present on 6 March. In Eastern Cape, an **American Golden Plover** *Pluvialis dominica* was found at Seekoei on 5 January and what is assumed to be the same individual was seen at the Kromme River estuary on 22 January. Single **Pacific Golden Plovers** *P. fulva* were at Muzi Pan, KwaZulu-Natal, from 21 December until at least 6 January, and at Den Staat wetlands, Limpopo, on 3 January.

Southern Africa's 14th **Baird's Sandpiper** *Calidris bairdii* discovered at Wadrift Salt Pan, north of Eland's Bay, Western Cape, on 16 December, was present until 1 February. **Pectoral Sandpipers**

*C. melanotos* were found at Cape Recife, Eastern Cape, on 14 February, Sappi Stanger wetlands, KwaZulu-Natal, on 11–12 April, and Vaalkop Dam, North West Province, on 28 December. The **Broad-billed Sandpiper** *Limicola falcinellus* found at Geelbek in West Coast National Park, Western Cape, on 16 November, was still present on 8 January; it was erratic in its appearances but was found again on 21 March. Another Broad-billed Sandpiper was at De Mond Nature Reserve, Western Cape, on 10 January. Southern Africa's fourth **Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes* was present at the Sappi Stanger wetlands, KwaZulu-Natal, from 24 December to 12 April. Single **Green Sandpipers** *T. ochropus* were reported from Northern Farms, Gauteng, on 5–25 January at least; Zaagkuildrift Road, north of Pretoria, on 15 February; Mkhombo Dam, Gauteng, on 13 April; Pafuri, Limpopo, on 17 January; and near Ngala Camp, Kruger National Park, on 29 January and 17 February. A **Red-necked Phalarope** *Phalaropus lobatus* was found between Bredasdorp and Struisbaai, Western Cape, on 30 December. **Red Phalaropes** *P. fulicarius* were observed at Dyer Island, Western Cape, on 8 January (one), a large dam at the base of Sani Pass, KwaZulu-Natal, on 7 January (two), a farm dam near Richmond, KwaZulu-Natal, on 17–20 January (one), and near Shingwedzi, Limpopo, on 14 January (one).

At least three **Franklin's Gulls** *Larus pipixcan* were seen in Western Cape: one in winter plumage along the Liesbeek River, near Observatory, on 13 January, another at Port Owen, near Velddrif, on 17–19 May and a third near Seal Island in False Bay, on 13–18 May at least. One in full breeding plumage was discovered at Richards Bay, KwaZulu-Natal, on 22 April and another at Orient Beach in East London, Eastern Cape, on 13 May; the latter was still in the area on 7 June. A **Common Black-headed Gull** *L. ridibundus* was at the Mfolozi River mouth, KwaZulu-Natal, on 13 February. An adult

**Lesser Black-backed Gull** *L. fuscus* remained at Orient Beach in East London, Eastern Cape, from 1 April until at least late June. An immature was present in May–June, with another immature also there in June. A **Sabine's Gull** *Xema sabini* was at Borchard's Quarry Sewage Works, Western Cape, on 27 February.

In Eastern Cape, several **Antarctic Terns** *Sterna vittata* were seen in mid June, with two adults and a juvenile at Nahoon Reef and a further four individuals near Gonubie Point; this is quite some way further east than where these birds are normally recorded on South Africa's shores. A single **Roseate Tern** *S. dougallii* at Orient Beach on 25 June was also a rather interesting find for the area. On 3 May, the regularly returning **Bridled Tern** *S. anaethetus* was relocated at Cape Recife, near Port Elizabeth, for its eighth season; after an absence it was seen again on 13 June. A visit to Bird Island in Algoa Bay, on 9–11 June, produced a **Sooty Tern**. A **Brown (Common Noddy)** *Anous stolidus* was reported near the mouth of the Breede River, Western Cape, on 1–2 March.

At Marievale Bird Sanctuary, Gauteng, a probable **European Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia turtur* was seen on 15 January; however, it was not possible to eliminate the possibility that the bird was an Oriental Turtle Dove *S. orientalis* or an escape. A surprise find was a juvenile **Narina Trogon** *Apaloderma narina* in *Acacia* thicket along the Kat River, c.20 km north-west of Prince Albert, Western Cape, in the middle of the Karoo, on 23 May; although this species is regular along the coastal strip of the Garden Route, this sighting is more than 100 km due north.

A **Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava* at Strandfontein Sewage Works, Western Cape, on 8 February, was still present on 4 March. The second **Citrine Wagtail** *M. citreola* for southern Africa stayed at Kleinmond Sewage Works, Western Cape, on 11–12 April (Fig. 9); the first record is from May 1998 near Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape. A **Grey Wagtail** *M. cinerea* was present at the crocodile farm in St Lucia, KwaZulu-

Natal, on 5 January. South Africa's eighth **Golden Pipit** *Tmetothylacus tenellus* was found in Mkhuze Game Reserve, KwaZulu-Natal, on 28 December.

#### A Basra Reed Warbler

*Acrocephalus griseldis* was seen at Coniston farm, Limpopo, along a seasonal tributary of the Sand River, on 10 February. On 14 February, a **Marsh Warbler** *A. palustris* was identified in coastal thicket near Cape Recife, Eastern Cape. In the Northern Cape, an **Olive-tree Warbler** *Hippolias olivetorum* was trapped and ringed at Witsand Nature Reserve on 28 January. A **Collared Flycatcher** *Ficedula albicollis* was claimed from Blackstone Edge farm ( $22^{\circ}54'18''S$   $29^{\circ}43'05''E$ ), Limpopo, on 11 February. An immature **Bush Blackcap** *Lioptilus nigricapillus* in a Heidelberg garden, south-east of Johannesburg, Gauteng, in June represents either unusually extensive altitudinal migration or juvenile dispersal (per TH).

#### Tanzania

A visit to the East Usambara Mountains in early January 2009 produced records of several localised species such as **Spot-throat Modulatrix stictigula**, **Green-headed Oriole** *Oriolus chlorocephalus* and the endemic race *usambanicus* of **Eastern Double-collared Sunbird** *Cinnyris mediocris*, which is sometimes recognised as a separate species 'Usambara Double-collared Sunbird' (Fig. 12). On 30 January, two pairs of **Spike-heeled Larks** *Chersomanes albofasciata* of the isolated race *beesleyi*, sometimes treated as a separate species 'Beesley's Lark', were seen at Angyata Osugat, north of Arusha (Fig. 10). To the south, a **Bearded Vulture** *Gypaetus barbatus* was seen soaring over the lower slopes of Mt Meru (Fig. 11) (MGo).

The first **Black Tern** *Chlidonias niger* for Tanzania was photographed in a large mixed tern flock with **Lesser Crested Terns** *Sterna bengalensis*, **Roseate Terns** *S. dougallii* and **Saunders's Terns** *S. saundersi* on the small Mazine Island, Pangani, on 21 March 2009 (OK; Fig. 13).

#### Tristan da Cunha group

In 2009, on Tristan, up to four **Cattle Egrets** *Bubulcus ibis* were noted: one on 3 April, 2–3 from 10 May, 3–4 from 3 June, with one still present on 27 June (Fig. 14). One was also on Nightingale from 6 April to 10 June at least. An immature **Little Blue Heron** *Egretta caerulea* was on Tristan from 16 April, with a second there from 24 April; one was still present on 22 May (Fig. 15). Possibly the first **Little Egret** *E. garzetta* for Tristan da Cunha stayed on the island on 3–27 April (Fig. 16). A **Snowy Egret** *E. thula* was present from 16 April to 3 June. Thus, on 16 April, there were four white herons on the pool by the volcano: a Cattle Egret, a Little Blue Heron, a Little Egret and a Snowy Egret. Other vagrants included an immature **American Purple Gallinule** *Porphyrrio martinica* on 18–22 April at least, with another on 1 June, a **Hudsonian Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus hudsonicus* at the Patches on 2–4 January at least, and a **Franklin's Gull** *Larus pipixcan* on 19 April (BR).

An adult **Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea* flew past a ship west of Gough Island, in the South Atlantic, at  $40^{\circ}25'91''S$   $09^{\circ}59'53''W$ , heading towards South America on 8 April 2009 (Fig. 17); this constitutes the first record for the Tristan da Cunha group (PP).

#### Uganda

On 2 May, a **Wattled Crane** *Bucorvus carunculatus* was seen foraging at the Kibimba rice scheme, in the south-east, and was photographed the next day; this appears to be the first record of this globally threatened species for Uganda (SNK). A female **Golden-naped Weaver** *Ploceus aureonucha* was seen in a feeding flock near an oxbow lake in Semiliki National Park on 16 June (HB); this species was discovered at this site as recently as 2006 (see Bull. ABC 14: 200–202).

#### Zambia

A **Speckled Pigeon** *Columba guinea* which found its way inside the Livingstone Museum on 23 March

2009 was the fourth confirmed record for the country (BS).

#### Zimbabwe

A **Basra Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus griseldis* was claimed from Masoka Camp, in the Zambezi River Valley, on 7 January 2009; there are very few confirmed records of this vagrant in southern Africa (per TH).

Records were collated by Ron Demey from contributions supplied by Clive Barlow (CBa), Peter Becker (PB), Mark Bing (MB), Stefan Brehme (SB), Chris Brewster (CB), Brian Bridges (BB), Doline Bridges (DB), Bernd de Brujin (BdB), Herbert Byaruhanga (HB), Mary Crickmore (MC), Andy Deighton (AD), Robert J. Dowsett (RJD), Françoise Dowsett-Lemaire (FD-L), Roger Fotso (RF), Elmar Fuchs (EF), Daphne Goldsworthy (DG), Mike Goldsworthy (MG), Martin Goodey (MGo), Trevor Hardaker (TH), Jens Hering (JH), Andrew Hester (AH), Harold Hester (HH), Gert Huijzers (GH), Glynis Humphreys (GHu), Colin Jackson (CJ), Trevor Jenner/Birding Ethiopia–Jenner Expeditions (TJ), Sarah Nachuba Kasozi (SNK), Ole Krogh (OK), Matthew Kuhn (MK), Graham McCulloch (GMCC), Michael Mills/Birding Africa (MM), Dominic Mitchell (DM), Claudien Nsabagasani (CN), Phil Palmer (PP), Bram Piot (BP), Adam Riley (AR), Detlef Robel (DR), Brad Robson (BR), Volker Salewski (VS), Lamin Sanyang (LS), Rob Simmons (RS), Adrian Skerrett (AS), Neil Smith (NS), Glen Stephens (GS), Bob Stjernstedt (BS), Jaap van der Waarde (JvdW), Tim Wacher (TW), Ian White (IW), Eddy Wymenga (EW), Leo Zwarts (LZ) and from Africa—Birds & Birding, Birding World, Dutch Birding, Sandgrouse, capebirdnet, SARareBirdAlert, [www.zesforbirds.co.za](http://www.zesforbirds.co.za) and [s-a-rarebirdnews@googlegroups.com](mailto:s-a-rarebirdnews@googlegroups.com).

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# Reviews



## Atlas des Oiseaux Nicheurs de la Grande Comore, de Mohéli et d'Anjouan

Michel Louette, Hachime Abdérémane, Ibrahim Yahaya & Danny Meirte, 2008. *Studies in Afrotropical Zoology n° 294*. Tervuren, Belgium: Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale. 240 pp., numerous colour photos, colour illustrations and maps. ISBN: 978-9-0747-5237-4. Softback, € 35 + free CD: *Guide sonore des oiseaux nicheurs des Comores*, M. Herremans, 2001.

The Comoros were the least known ornithologically of all Indian Ocean Islands and the only ones without any significant and modern publication on birds. Of the four islands, one, Mayotte, which is under French administration, has recently produced its own field guide (*Les Oiseaux de Mayotte*, Clément *et al.* 2008, Naturalistes de Mayotte). The other three islands, which form an independent republic, are covered by this new atlas, well produced and lavishly illustrated throughout with colour maps.

Following a history of ornithology in the Comoros and a description of their environmental features and the impacts of human activities (although there is nothing on hunting!), 20 pages, half of them island maps, are devoted to methodology. This involved a combination of

point counts (2,400) along specific routes and additional records made during other surveys, between 1981 and 2006. Although the effort was unavoidably variable between years and with different teams involved, every record was accurately located with elevation and habitat, and any breeding data were noted. The end product is presented on grid maps of  $1 \times 1$  minute squares (1 minute = 1,800 m) with colour shading illustrating the frequency of records. Ten natural environmental parameters (elevation, rainfall, habitat, etc.) are associated to each square and a potentially suitable breeding area is defined for each species within which its known presence is given. For each species, distribution maps and a photograph or drawing face the text, which presents information on status, distribution, habitat, ecology, breeding and conservation.

Final chapters sum up the status of the 59 breeding species, bird communities in each habitat on each island, the origin of the species and their biogeography, threats and conservation, the proposed protected areas (almost wholly lacking today!) and Important Bird Areas. There is also an appendix listing other species recorded.

This volume is the result of many years of field work by over 20 people, and is useful, well documented and attractive. It should certainly assist the development of local ornithology and, more importantly, conservation in the islands. The latter is still in its infancy and sorely needed. Overpopulation by humans, deforestation and over-use of natural resources in this poor country threaten a number of the endemic species, and some of them are already Extinct or Critically Endangered on one or more islands. This book will also help foreign birders to plan a visit, although there is no chapter on

where to go and how to get around. I can say, from my own experience, that Grande Comore is by far the safest and most accessible island, with local agencies organising tours on Mt Karthala, where most of the endemics are quite easily seen. One can only hope that so much knowledge will be soon translated into a field guide and in English (unfortunately there is no translation in this atlas).

Jean-Marc Thiollay

## Shorebirds of the Northern Hemisphere

Richard Chandler, 2009. London, UK: Christopher Helm. 448 pp., 700 colour photographs and 150 colour maps. Softback. ISBN: 978-1-4081-0790-4. UK£29.99.

This well-presented book is a shorebird identification guide notable for the lavish use of photographs to illustrate the different plumages. The introduction includes a helpful summary of the plumages and moult, plus a section on behaviour, again illustrated by the author's own photographs.

The vast majority of the book comprises the species accounts, presented in a sequence that broadly follows that of the British Ornithologists' Union, with non-UK species inserted as necessary. Thus it remains rather conventional in structure, rather than grasping the more 'revolutionary' sequences that have been proposed since the initial upheaval suggested by the Sibley and Monroe revision of higher-level systematics. For each species there are all the sections one would expect of a guide of this type, including identification features, age / sex characters, racial information and distribution (with some very clear maps). As each species is illustrated by 4–8 and in some cases up to 14 photographs,



usually with helpful captions, the text is rather reduced.

The photographs selected, mostly taken by the author, are really good and the vast majority of them are crisp and clear. Because he has studied shorebirds for many years, Richard Chandler has an eye for the shot that best illustrates the key features. I really enjoyed looking at this array of great pictures, which have also been well reproduced. However, I was a little disappointed that the book's structure meant that each species is treated separately and there are very few (I didn't notice any) comparisons between species, meaning that one must turn pages to achieve this. Although the text does of course make such comparisons, it would have brought alive the differences if the photographs also had done so.

From an African perspective, there are a couple of downsides to the guide. The most obvious is that the definition of the Northern Hemisphere used here essentially follows the boundaries of the Palearctic in Africa, i.e. from southern Morocco to Egypt. Southern species that have occurred as vagrants further north, such as Egyptian Plover *Pluvianus aegyptius* and Black-headed Lapwing *Vanellus tectus*, are included, and Somali Courser *Cursorius (cursor) somalensis* is illustrated as it might occur. However, no fewer than 20 species of African shorebirds that occur within the *real* Northern Hemisphere are not included here. By way of comparison, just three Asian and six South American species are so affected.

The other slight negative for ABC members is that northern species spending their first winter (and sometimes the following year too) at southern latitudes are not as extensively illustrated as they might be. Very heavy wear and complex moult patterns can make some of these individuals more problematical to identify. The illustrations and text do certainly help and if one works one's way through the features, identification should be achievable.

The one-sentence digest at the top of each new species' page contrasts with the thoughtful text and, one



has to say, they are trite. Take, for example, the comment on Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris* which is 'similar to Red Knot [*C. canutus*] in proportions'—really? I gather these are not the author's words and they are certainly best ignored.

Although sewn and glued, my copy's spine is already creasing. It seems a shame that the book wasn't bound as well as *The Shorebird Guide*, a recently published North American photographic guide, which also lies flat when opened. I hope it lasts as well, as the present volume will be well used.

Overall, Richard Chandler's book is an excellent guide and a valuable contribution. It needs to be on the side table of all those shorebird aficionados, not just in the bookshelf. Am I biased, surely not?

Tony Prater

### Birds of the Horn of Africa

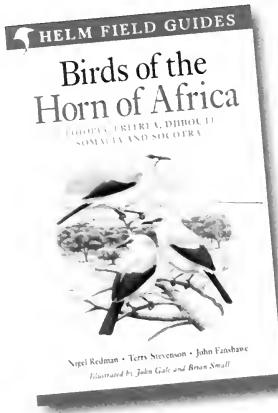
Nigel Redman, Terry Stevenson, John Fanshawe, 2009. London, UK: Christopher Helm. 496 pp, 213 colour plates and many maps. Softback. ISBN978-0-7136-6541-3. UK £29.99.

The huge continent of Africa possesses an extremely diverse range of countries and an equally diverse spread of habitats, whilst the four main countries covered by this new guide are famous for their very diverse range of birds and other wildlife. Eastern Africa is best known, to non-specialists at least, for its mammals, but its avifauna is both fascinating and beautiful. A very wide

range of habitats, from coasts to deserts and bushland to forest, as well as some quite high mountains comprise the region covered by this latest field guide, a region which is still, in parts at least, very remote and difficult of access, indeed some areas (especially war-torn Somalia) are effectively completely inaccessible at present.

This new book is one of the latest of the Helm Field Guides, which have been invariably of a high quality. Several field guides are now available covering the countries of eastern Africa and southern Africa, but this is the first such book devoted to that part of north-east Africa south and east of the Sahara. Within its remit, the book encompasses Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti and Somalia, as well as the small archipelago of Socotra, which although politically part of Yemen (and can only be visited via the latter) is Afrotropical in its avifaunal composition (the same is not necessarily the case for other taxa, including the islands' flora). Socotran birds are also covered by another Helm field guide, that to the birds of the Middle East (Porter *et al.* 1996), of which a new edition is currently work in progress. The illustrations of these birds, especially the all-important endemics, are generally better and more detailed in the work under review here, compare for one those of the endemic Socotra Sunbird *Chalcomitra balfouri*, despite that the same artists were largely responsible for the depictions in both works. (Furthermore, the intervening years have witnessed a great many additions to the list of birds recorded on Socotra, as well as significant changes to the taxonomy of some of these.)

Over 1,000 species are covered, represented by more than 2,600 individual illustrations on 213 colour plates. The avifauna of the region combines elements representative of several biomes, which overlap with other regions, especially East Africa, but there are a fair number of species that are more or less endemic to the Horn of Africa (and Socotra). Because of this overlap, some illustrations have been borrowed (though often rearranged on a plate) from a previous Helm Field Guide, *Birds of*



*East Africa* (Stevenson & Fanshawe 2002). Where necessary too, such re-used illustrations have been digitally manipulated to ensure that the correct subspecies occurring in the region is shown. New plates were commissioned to cover the remaining species—c.20% of the species found in the Horn do not occur further south in East Africa. All new and previously used plates are by John Gale or Brian Small.

The taxonomy employed broadly follows the African Bird Club checklist ([www.africanbirdclub.org/checklist](http://www.africanbirdclub.org/checklist)) and English names are those considered to be most established in eastern Africa. However, 27 of the more distinct forms are afforded specific status, e.g. Somali Ostrich *Struthio molybdophanes* (formerly treated within *S. camelus*) and Somali Courser *Cursorius somalensis* (formerly within Cream-coloured Courser *C. cursor*), and some other races are noted separately as potential species, e.g. the two forms of Winding Cisticola *Cisticola galactotes* that occur in the region are afforded separate treatment, as Coastal Cisticola *C. (g.) haematocephala* and Ethiopian Cisticola *C. (g.) lugubris*. Redman and his co-workers seem to have universally adopted recently suggested changes to the taxonomy of Socotran birds. Some might have preferred to see these recommenda-

tions become more embedded before their wholesale adoption in a work of this nature. The book is also commendably up to date with vagrant occurrences including, for example, the Himalayan Swiftlets *Aerodramus brevirostris* observed on Socotra in November 2007 (see *Bull. ABC* 15: 136), although full details of this outstanding record (regrettably) remain unpublished. In this and other respects, the authors have relied on a wide network of contacts, detailed in the Acknowledgements, to good effect. Furthermore, recent literature appears to have been generally well covered, although much of it, as one would expect in a field guide, is not specifically cited. Indeed, the Bibliography is perhaps notable chiefly for its brevity (with some spare white space 'going begging') and somewhat haphazard coverage, e.g. with most papers in the periodical literature not being mentioned, which will perhaps lead some readers to wonder why certain articles have been selected for inclusion?

The guide's introductory sections cover the basics of bird identification and avian topography, followed by a brief description of the region's geography, climate and habitats. The species accounts then take up the bulk of the book, which closes with a checklist of the region, and appendices covering endemic species and hypothetical species (included in the book but requiring confirmation). The format of the species accounts follows the usual pattern, with a colour plate facing a page of descriptive text and a distribution map. The illustrations are crisp and accurate, and clearly laid out on each page, showing the adult plumage as well as any sexual differences, juvenile plumages, in-flight views and subspecific variation where necessary. Although quite small, the distribution maps are of clear cartography, with the range colour-coded as to status (resident, breeding or non-breeding visitor or migrant). The text for each species

comprises a description, emphasising the important distinguishing features and including Voice. Habitat is described together with specific habits useful to help identify the species, as well as status in the region. Despite the need to pack the information into limited space, the text is pleasingly free of too many abbreviations. Nonetheless, because of such limitations, it has been necessary to give only brief information on issues such as subspecies ranges, which will thus sometimes require elucidation from more specialist and detailed sources. Errors in these are not immediately apparent, at least within Africa, although the breeding range of the eastern subspecies of Cinereous Bunting *Emberiza cinerea semenowi* is incorrectly solely delimited as 'south-west Iran' herein. Any alternative English names in widespread use are listed whilst brief notes discussing species-level taxonomy close each account.

The question finally arises as to whether I would buy the book? If you already own *Birds of East Africa*, is it worth buying this guide when there is such overlap in the species coverage? If travelling to the region, I recommend that you do not try and rely on the earlier book. It is so much more convenient to have one guide covering all of the region's birds, especially when it includes the 70+ species (such as the endemic Stresemann's Bush Crow *Zavattariornis stresemanni* and White-tailed Swallow *Hirundo megaensis*) found only in this remarkable corner of Africa.

Derek Toomer

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# Letters to the Editor



## Conservation-driven changes in English bird names, and the case of the Liben Lark

It is widely felt that changes to the English names of birds need to be very well justified if they are to win support. One of the better reasons for such changes must be conservation. In seeking to generate interest in threatened species, I have occasionally been moved to replace names of discoverers and dedicatees ('patronymics') with more neutral ones that involve either plumage pattern and colour or, preferably, place of origin. Collar & Stuart (1985: xix) reported that giving priority to place over person was undertaken 'in the belief that conservation of a species might better be promoted using a name which characterises it in terms of a particular site which itself requires conservation, and at any rate not in terms of something which may have no positive significance or association for those best placed to undertake the conservation needed'. That sensitivities to colonial pasts or explorational rivalries have not entirely faded was brought home to my colleagues in the early 1990s when an invitation to comment on the status of 'Sawtell's Swiftlet' *Collocalia leucophaeus* was declined until the bird's name was altered to Tahiti Swiftlet. The explanatory notes that accompany the BirdLife checklist ([www.birdlife.org/datazone/species/index](http://www.birdlife.org/datazone/species/index); right-hand column) confirm the general principle of preferring place names in the names of birds.

When a few years ago it became apparent from research by Lizanne Roxburgh that Chaplin's Barbet *Lybius chaplini* is under threat from loss of habitat, I asked her whether changing its name to Zambian Barbet—since the species is endemic to Zambia—would be helpful to the cause of its conservation. She considered that it would. I there-

fore submitted a proposal to the BirdLife Taxonomic Working Group (BTWG) and, when the species was uplisted to Vulnerable in 2007, we (i.e. BirdLife International) duly changed its name. Unsurprisingly, this has not met with immediate acceptance, but I would like to think that in a few years, when people have had sufficient time to grow more accustomed to the idea, they will appreciate its intention and value.

On 22 May 2009 I attended a workshop in Negele, Ethiopia, convened to discuss ways to avert the extinction of the Sidamo Lark *Heteromirafra sidamoensis* and the loss of its habitat on the tiny adjacent Liben Plain (see Collar *et al.* 2008, Spottiswoode *et al.* 2009). Some 35 local stakeholders, including pastoralists' representatives, government officials, aid agency workers and journalists, took part in the event. Several important measures were agreed, but one of the more unexpected outcomes was a unanimously endorsed request, accompanied by more applause than at any other point in the day, that the name of the species be changed to 'Liben Lark'. This is not, of course, a question of patronymic versus geographic name, rather one in which the geographic is so wrong as to be counterproductive: Sidamo is a province of Ethiopia which has now been restricted by new borders well outside the range of the species, and in any case the ethnic group of that name never extended to Negele and the Liben Plain (M. Wondafrash pers. comm. 2009). Given this, plus the fact that 'Sidamo Lark' is not universally current (it is 'Erard's Lark' in Ash & Atkins 2009), I hope it will not be considered destabilising or irritating to accede to the workshop's request. Indeed, if it helps engender real local pride and sensitivity to conservation, and thereby contributes to

the species's survival, ornithologists everywhere will have cause to celebrate. The BTWG has accepted the new name, and I look hopefully to the wider ornithological community to support this step.

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## White-eyes in Congo-Brazzaville

In their paper on the avifauna of Congo-Brazzaville, Rainey *et al.* (2009, *Bull. ABC* 16: 53–60) wrote (p. 59) that 'A number of taxa including (...) Forest White-eye *Zosterops (senegalensis) stenocricotus* have been claimed but require confirmation.' They apparently overlooked a record by R. J. Dowsett & F. Dowsett-Lemaire (1998, *Bull. ABC* 5: 143) concerning several white-eyes seen on the Dja and Ngoko rivers, from Ndongo to Moloundou, on

the Congo / Cameroon border in December 1997–January 1998. They also overlooked what their second author wrote in Mokoko Ikonga & Bockandza (2001), although this reference is cited, i.e. that a white-eye was caught at Botongo (Likouala-aux-Herbes) on 24 February 2000, and that this was the third mention for the country. Unfortunately the 2001 paper gave the wrong reference in support (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 1998, *Malimbus* 20: 15–32), as the latter makes no mention of white-eyes, which birds were

seen only after the authors finalised the *Malimbus* manuscript. The form of white-eye was of course *stenocricotus*, which in those days was included in Yellow White-eye *Z. senegalensis*. Even though we are thanked for having refereed the 2009 paper, the version we commented on (23 September 2008) made no mention of white-eyes.

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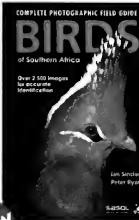
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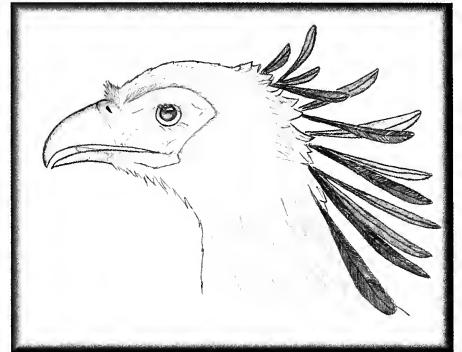
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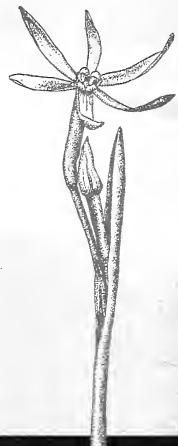
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Contributions will be accepted subject to editing and refereeing by independent reviewers, where appropriate. The Editorial Team will be happy to advise authors on the acceptability of material at draft stage if desired.

### Submissions

Two hard 'printed' copies should be sent (not e-mail) to the editor's address on the inside front cover. Handwritten manuscripts should be double-spaced on one side of the paper only, with wide margins all round. All submissions are acknowledged.

Contributions are accepted in English or French. French summaries are required

for all papers published in English, and vice versa. Those submitting papers should supply a summary for translation into English, or French, as appropriate.

If you submit your contribution on CD or floppy disk, please state computer (e.g. IBM compatible PC, Macintosh) and word-processing package (e.g. Word, WordPerfect) used.

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### Preferred names

Given the current instability over worldwide lists of bird names, authors are requested to follow those used in The Birds of Africa Vols. 1-7. The African Bird Club has recently published ([www.africanbirdclub.org/resources/](http://www.africanbirdclub.org/resources/)

checklist.html) a checklist of birds in its region. This is based on Birds of Africa but incorporates more recent revisions where appropriate. It includes preferred scientific, English and French names, as well as races and alternatives used by publications widely used in Africa. For bird names this list should be used or at least the preferred name used there should be given as an alternative. For non-Birds of Africa species (e.g. from the Malagasy region) use Dowsett & Forbes-Watson (1993). Deviations from such works should be noted and the reasons given. The Editorial Team will keep abreast of changes in nomenclature and when an agreed list of African names is available, will consider switching to follow it.

### Style

Authors are requested to follow conventions used in The Bulletin of the African Bird Club and to refer to a recent issue for guidance. A detailed style guide can be obtained, either electronically or as a hard copy, on request from the Managing Editor.

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Although we have suggested a minimum of UK£30 to become a Supporting Member, any contribution is welcome. All members of the Club, even if they do not feel able to become Supporting Members themselves, are invited to nominate candidates for supported memberships. Candidates should be nationals of an African country, with a genuine interest in wild birds but without the resources to become members in their own right. Africans who think they may qualify are very welcome to put their own

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The ABC Representatives scheme aims to support existing members by providing a local point of contact in their region, for example, to answer queries to the Club, to solicit submissions for the bulletin, and possibly to arrange local meetings for members. Existing ABC members can contact their local Representative in the first instance with queries relating to the Club. ABC Representatives help to recruit new members in their region, for example, by distributing posters and arranging local advertising. In Africa, ABC Representatives help to identify opportunities to invest the ABC Conservation Fund and candidates for the Supported Membership scheme.

The Club aims to appoint many further ABC Representatives. If you are interested in supporting and promoting the Club in your region, have any queries, or require further information relating to the ABC Representatives scheme please do not hesitate to contact the Membership Secretary at the Club address, e-mail [membership@africanbirdclub.org](mailto:membership@africanbirdclub.org).

ABC is seeking Country Representatives in the following countries, principally within the Club's region: Algeria, Azores, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde Islands, Chad, Comoros & Mayotte, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea Conakry, Madeira, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Niger, Réunion, Rodriguez, Senegal, Socotra, Somalia, St Helena, Sudan, Togo, Tristan da Cunha and USA.

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The scheme now also includes clubs who wish to be affiliated with the African Bird Club in African countries where it is difficult for local individuals to become members in their own right. Clubs accepted for membership under the scheme receive up to six copies of each issue of the bulletin for circulation among their members. Instead of paying a membership fee, Clubs are asked to provide a short annual report on their activities that may be published in the bulletin. Clubs interested in becoming Affiliated Member Clubs are invited to apply to the ABC Secretary giving details of their membership, their constitution or a statement of their objectives and conditions of their membership, and their activities to date.

### ABC Information Service

ABC offers a service to help members with information requests. Perhaps you are planning a trip to Africa and need local advice, or maybe you are in search of an obscure fact about an African species. The Club does not guarantee to find all the

answers but will try to help. The service is free to ABC members. Contact: Keith Betton, who is also custodian of ABC's journal library, at 8 Dukes Close, Folly Hill, Farnham, Surrey, GU9 0DR, UK. Tel: +44 1252 724068. E-mail: [info@africanbirdclub.org](mailto:info@africanbirdclub.org).

### AfricanBirding e-mail discussion list

Launched, in October 2000, by the ABC and the Pan-African Ornithological Congress, AfricanBirding or AB, as it is known, has become a useful forum for those interested in African birds. To join the discussion, which averages 1-2 messages a day, send a blank e-mail to [AfricanBirding-subscribe@yahoo groups.com](mailto:AfricanBirding-subscribe@yahoo groups.com). You will then receive an e-mail instructing you how to join.

The Club also maintains a list of members' e-mail addresses. This list is confidential and used only for Club purposes, e.g. for informing members of upcoming events and news concerning the Club. It is not divulged to anybody outside the Club or used for commercial advertising. At present it includes addresses for about 50% of the membership. Please send any additions or amendments to the membership secretary: [membership@africanbirdclub.org](mailto:membership@africanbirdclub.org).



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